

A hand is holding a fan of palm-leaf manuscripts. The leaves are made of dried palm leaf and are bound together at one end. Each leaf features a different illustration in dark ink. The top leaf shows a person on horseback. The second leaf shows a deer. The third leaf shows a snake. The fourth leaf shows a bird. The fifth leaf shows a fish. The sixth leaf shows a turtle. The seventh leaf shows a frog. The eighth leaf shows a snake. The ninth leaf shows a bird. The tenth leaf shows a fish. The eleventh leaf shows a turtle. The twelfth leaf shows a frog. The thirteenth leaf shows a snake. The fourteenth leaf shows a bird. The fifteenth leaf shows a fish. The sixteenth leaf shows a turtle. The seventeenth leaf shows a frog. The eighteenth leaf shows a snake. The nineteenth leaf shows a bird. The twentieth leaf shows a fish. The twenty-first leaf shows a turtle. The twenty-second leaf shows a frog. The twenty-third leaf shows a snake. The twenty-fourth leaf shows a bird. 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# PALM-LEAF MINIATURES

The Art of Raghunath Prusti of Orissa

J.P. DAS & JOANNA WILLIAMS



PALM-LEAF MINIATURES:  
The Art of Raghunath Prusti of  
Orissa

J.P. Das & Joanna Williams

1991 Pp. xii+92 Size 8 1/2" x 10 3/4"

Half-tone Illus. 94 Colour Illus. 12

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*Palm-Leaf Miniatures* is a study of and a tribute to Raghunath Prusti, an artist who lived about a hundred years ago. He wrote and illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts in Mundamarai, a small village in Ganjam District of southern Orissa late in the nineteenth century. He must have produced a large number of works, but only thirteen have so far been found in private and museum collections. Some of his works are still in his village, but other works of his have made their way to the New York Public Library, Museum Rietberg in Zurich, and to Museums in Bhubaneswar, Benares and New Delhi.

These thirteen known works reveal a distinctive style that combines the traditions of the area with contemporary details. Himself from a family of oil-men, Prusti produced illustrated books for patrons who were often the merchants of the locality. He grew from the position of an apprentice to an independent artist who also functioned as a story-teller, deciding what to illustrate and how to treat his subjects. His works ranged from the *Gita Govinda* to Oriya romances to a fortune-teller's cards. Some memories of this humble, maverick artist survive in his village even a century after his death.

Many other scribes produced illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts in the eighteenth through early twentieth centuries. While many of these works are of indifferent quality, Prusti's illustrations stand out as some of the most beautiful and imaginative.

Rs 450

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The Art of Raghunath Prusti of Orissa

J.P. DAS & JOANNA WILLIAMS



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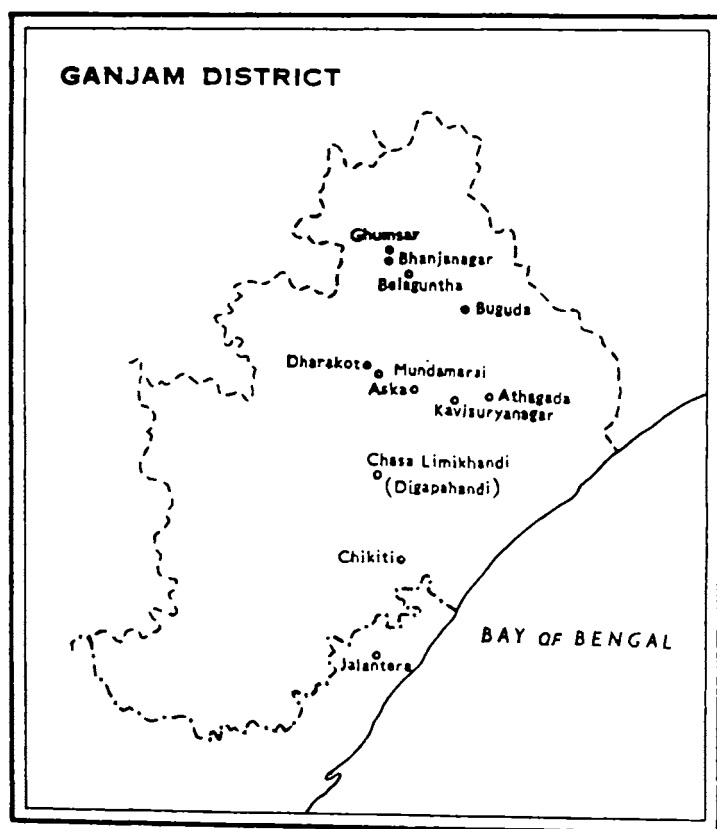
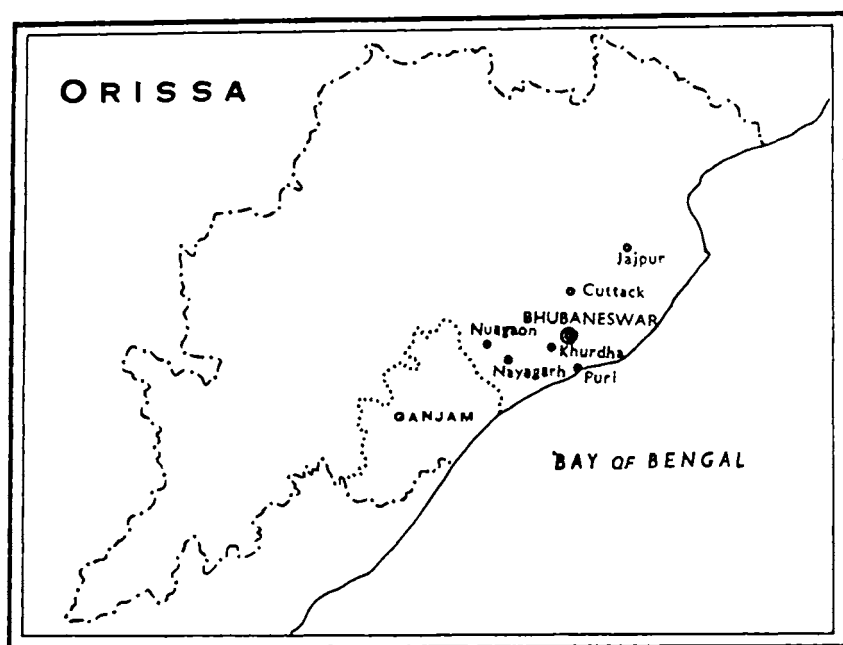
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## PREFACE

Looking back from the threshold of the twenty-first century, we may be amazed at the quaint and archaic form of palm-leaf manuscripts. It comes as a surprise to learn that a pile of palmyra folios laboriously engraved by hand and strung together between boards was the standard type of book used in some parts of India less than a hundred years ago. In Orissa, some remain in use today, although the production of manuscripts is almost at an end. Such relics of the past are bound to change. Traditionally the palm-leaf manuscript was recopied and immersed in water after a hundred years. Today it merely crumbles into dust unless carefully preserved. It is therefore time for us to scrutinize what still survives, documenting what we can and retrieving from this a picture of the past. The illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts of Orissa record not only what existed when they were made but also what interested people, their stories, ideals, and sense of humour. If we examine the pictures carefully, we see no longer a blur of uniform style but rather a wide range of concerns and of artistic quality. Out of the too-prevalent stereotype of the anonymous Indian artisan, the makers of these illustrations emerge as real individuals.

This is precisely where the present study began. We had enjoyed looking at several manuscripts that were accessible from publications--a rāgamālā known as the *Sangīta Dāmodara*, and a courtly poetic romance, the *Lāvāṇyavatī*. We realized that both were illustrated by the same hand, even



though at that point the published evidence suggested that the first was produced early in the eighteenth century, while the present owners of the second work said that it had been made only three generations ago. This puzzle led us into obscure arguments about chronology and the reading of colophons; other information ultimately confirmed the more recent date. In the process of comparing these with various illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts, we were delighted to find that more works by the same hand were preserved, unrecognized, in collections all over the world.

We also made a total of five visits to the town where this artist had lived, discovering by the end three additional works of his still preserved there. The owners of these works came to trust us and in 1987 kindly allowed photography of the masterpiece, the *Lāvanyavatī*, for the first time. While the details of Mundamarai must have changed in the past century, we had some sense of entering into the world in which these manuscripts were made. The scribe/illustrator grew from a name into an artist, a story-teller, and a personality. Our admiration for his work increased. This short study is therefore dedicated to that skillful, witty, yet humble individual, Raghunath Prusti, son of an oil-man from the village Mundamarai in southern Orissa.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>The name should be written Raghunātha Pṛusṭi, but we would prefer to present it simply as it is pronounced in Oriya. In general in this book, diacritical marks have been omitted for proper names of places and of people who lived in the last century. A short and preliminary version of this study appeared in *Artibus Asiae* XLVIII (1988), 131-159.

## CHAPTER I

### THE MAN AND THE LEGEND

Mundamarai is a small, bustling village in the middle of Ganjam District in southern Orissa. The name is locally etymologized as "Heads of the Dead" (*muṇḍa-marāyi*) from a battle in the middle of the nineteenth century, when the ruler of Dharakot routed the forces of the Bhañja family of Ghumsar and piled their skulls here. At that point, this area was controlled by the Rājā of Dharakot, two kilometers away, who in turn recognized the authority of the Gajapati rulers of Khurdha. Ultimately Khurdha's bond over such small states was a ritual one, based on the the Gajapati ruler's status as the manifestation and chief servant of Lord Jagannātha in Puri. The Marathas had briefly controlled Ganjam District in the mid-eighteenth century, and the British followed in 1765, but these overlords only consolidated the complex religio-political structure of the region.<sup>2</sup>

Ganjam in general is rich with courtly associations, both military and literary. Orissa's so-called "Prince of Poets", the eighteenth-century Upendra Bhañja, came from the princely family of Ghumsar in the north-west corner of the district, now known as Bhanjanagar. Kṛishṇa Simha, Rājā

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<sup>2</sup>Anncharlott Eschmann, Hermann Kulke, and Gaya Charan Tripathi, *The Cult of Jagannath and the Regional Traditions of Orissa*. New Delhi: Manohar, 1978, especially Ch. 18.

of Dharakot, (c. 1739-1828) wrote a *Mahābhārata* in Sanskritized Oriya, which remains well-known today. Jadumaṇi Mahāpātra (1781-1866), poet, painter, and wit, was born in the village Mathura in central Ganjam, although he later moved to the court of Nayagarh in Puri District. And the great nineteenth-century composer of songs, Kavisūrya Baladeva Ratha, was born in Badakhemundi, a small town near Aska, now known as Kavisuryanagar.

Ganjam is part of a transitional belt that extends into northern Andhra. In the 1880's and 90's, 30 to 40% of Ganjam District may have been Telugu-speaking.<sup>3</sup> Despite the consolidation of linguistic boundaries in modern India, this remains a bilingual area. Many individuals in Ganjam speak Telugu to some extent, and there is every reason to assume that this was at least equally true in the past.

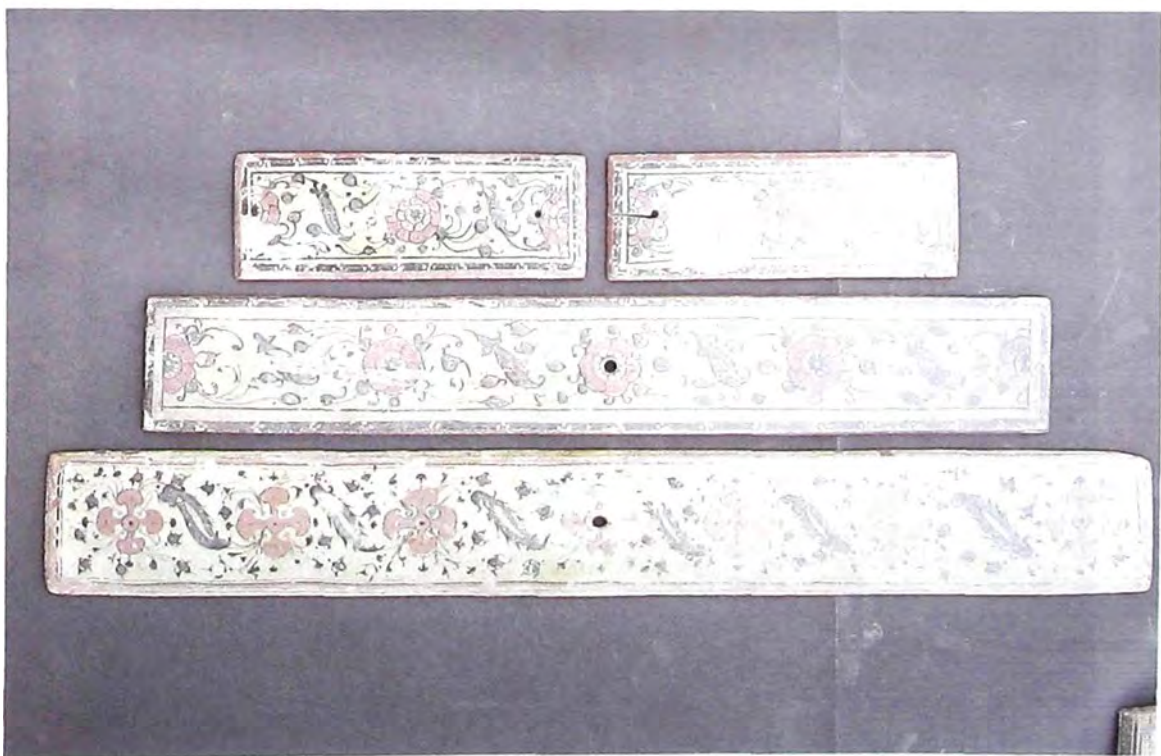
All kinds of Hindu communities are settled in Mundamarai, the merchants being particularly prosperous, for this is a trading centre for an area of about three hundred square miles. Today two merchant families (both called Subudhi) still preserve palm-leaf manuscripts that were made for their forefathers. Moreover they retain the memory of the finest artist who illustrated several of these manuscripts three generations ago. He was known as Ulu Chakra, a puzzling epithet. *Ulu* or *olu* in Oriya means "fool;" and *oluā* means "a bullock that strays into fields and gardens." The latter would fit the description of the artist by the eldest member of one Subudhi family, today a man of about eighty, who recalls stories told by his great-grandfather about this maverick. Ulu Chakra used to turn up more or less

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<sup>3</sup>S.C. Patra, *The Formation of the Province of Orissa*. Calcutta: Punthi Pustak, 1979, 38.

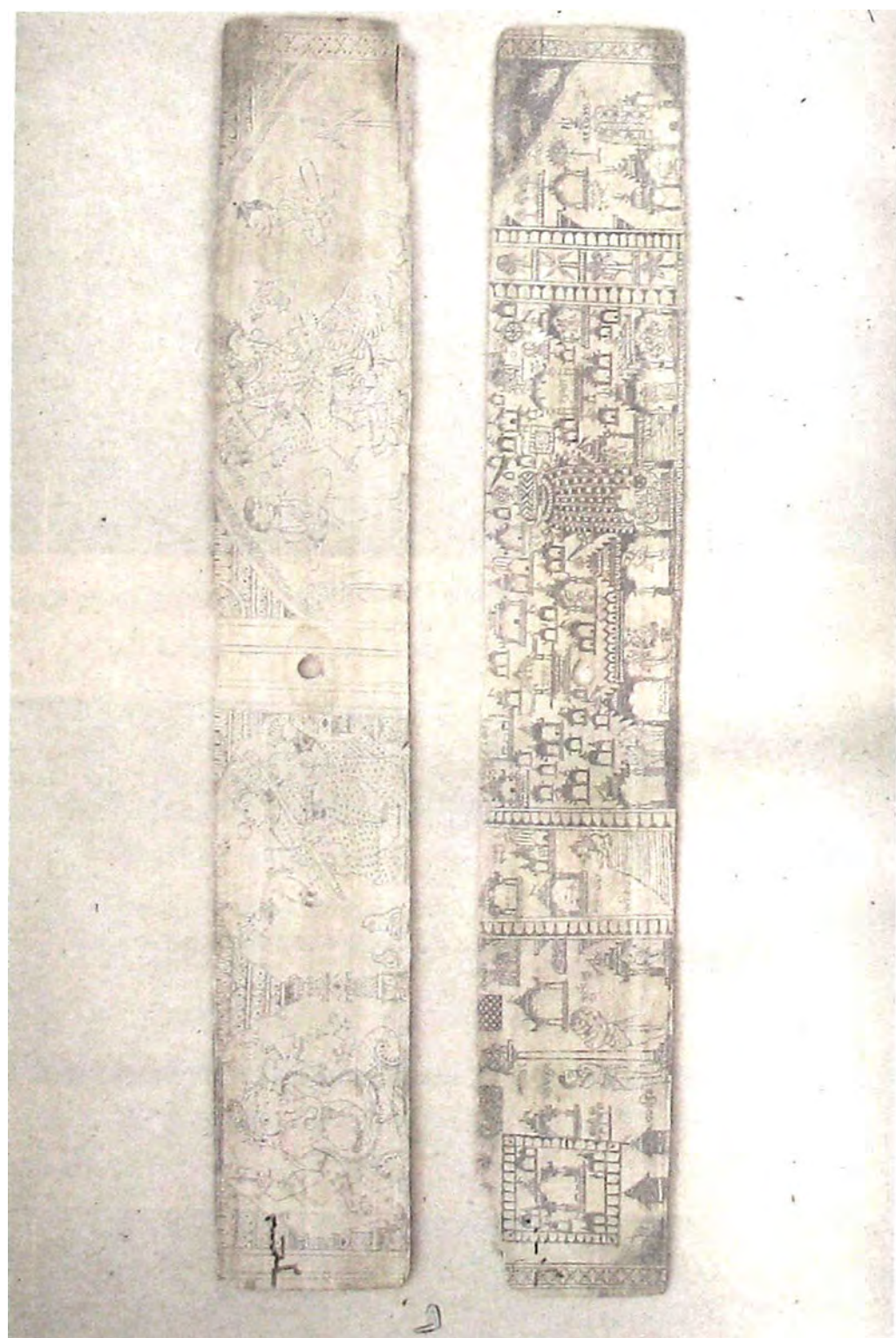


A. Mundamarai village, 1987.



B. Covers of (top to bottom) *Kuṇḍali Janāṇa*, *Ushābhiḷāsha*, and *Sangita Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum.





C. *Ushābhilāsha*, Orissa State Museum Ext. 25: Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī,  
Mahishāsuramardinī (top); Puri Temple (bottom).





D. *Kuṇḍali Janāṇa*, Orissa State Museum: Gaṇeśa (top), Poet Kavīsūrya and Jagannātha (bottom).





E. *Sangīta Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, (top to bottom): Himakirī.  
Lalita, and Tankāra Rāgas.





F. *Sangīta Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, (top to bottom): Jagannātha  
Mahishāsuramardini, Gaṇeśa .



G. Sangita Dāmodara, Orissa State Museum: Jagannātha Carts (top), Puri Temple (bottom). Digitized by srujan ka@gmail.com





H. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai: Worship of Rāma and Sitā by Brahmins (top); Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, Rāmāyana scenes (middle, bottom).





I. *Sobhāvati*, private collection, New Delhi: Writing a Love Letter (top);  
*Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi*, New York Public Library: Beggar and dog (bottom).

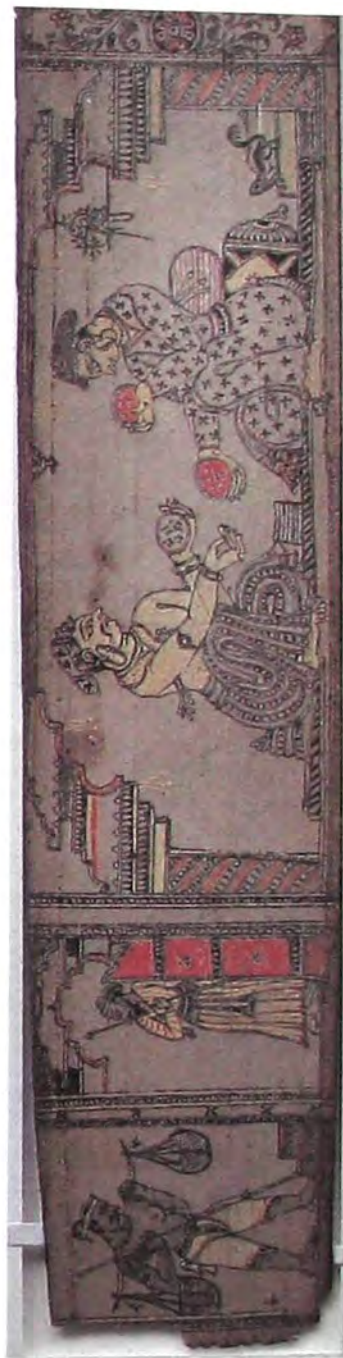
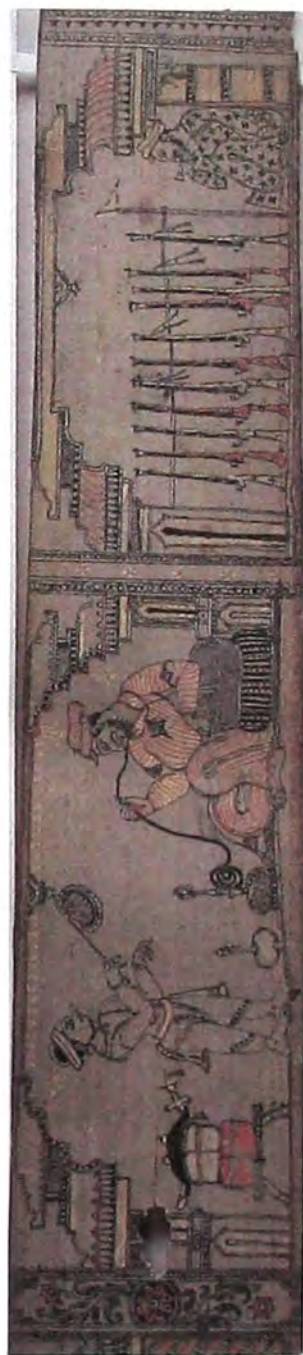


J. Mahishāsūramardini, Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin  
(top);  
Gīta Govinda shrine, Orissa State Museum (bottom).





K. *Gita Govinda* with commentary by Dhanañjaya, Orissa State Museum Ext.  
166, 5 leaves.



L. *Lāvanyavali* (dispersed), Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin,  
details of court scenes.





M. *Ushābhilāsha*, Orissa State Museum OL 23, Puri Temple (top), Bāṇa and courtiers (bottom).





1. *Gīta Govinda*, p.c. New Delhi, Nanda, Kṛishṇa, and Rādhā.



2. *Gīta Govinda*, p.c. New Delhi, Kṛishṇa and Rādhā.



3. *Gīta Govinda*, p.c. New Delhi, Kāliya-damana, Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, two demons.



4. *Āratrāṇa Chautiśā*, p.c. New Delhi, Viṣṇu as Rāmāpati.





5. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, p.c. New Delhi, Prince Kadamba.

6. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, p.c. New Delhi, Draupadī unrobed by Duḥśāsana; Sudāmā.



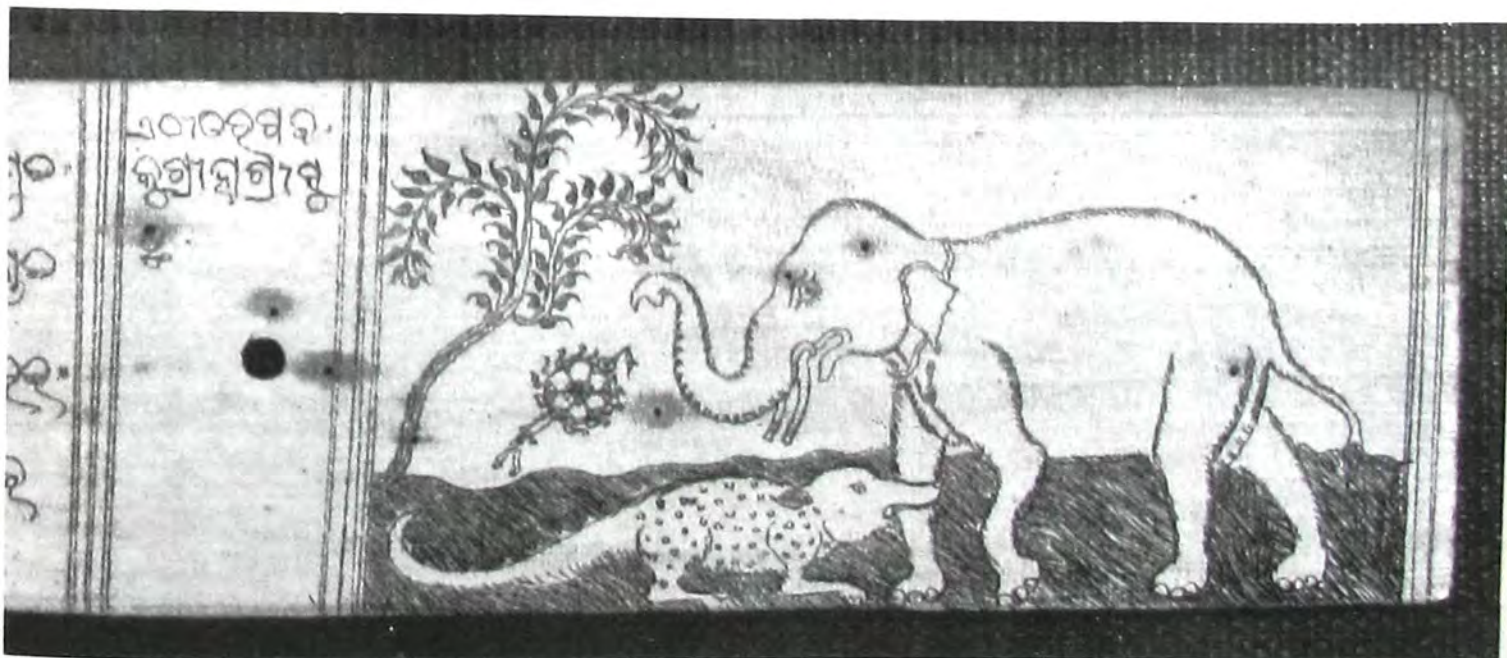


7. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, p.c. New Delhi, "As the *chakora* bird to the moon..."

8. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, p.c. New Delhi, Pregnant doe and hunter.











11. *Ushābhilāsha*, C. K. Subudhi Collection, Mundamarai, Gaṇeśa and Sarasvatī.



12. *Ushābhilāsha*, C. K. Subudhi Collection, Mundamarai, Viṣṇu and procession.



14. *Ushābhilāsha*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Śiva and Pārvatī in a boat.

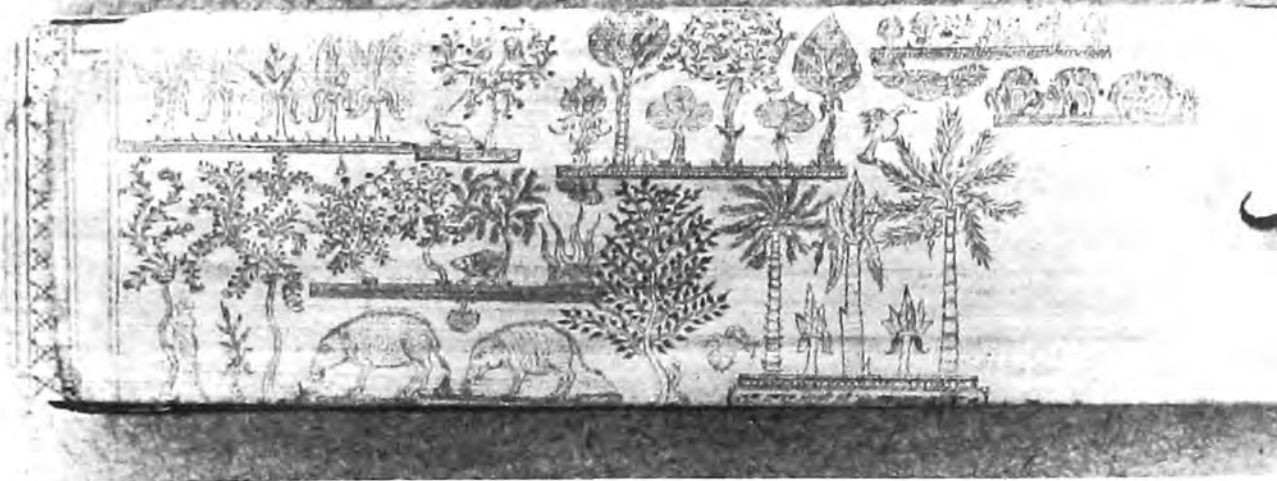


10. *Daśapoi*, C. K. Subudhi Collection, Mundamarai, Rādhā and Kṛishṇa.

13. *Ushābhilāsha*, C. K. Subudhi Collection, Mundamarai, Ushā and Aniruddha.







15. *Ushābhiḷāsha*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, landscape.



19. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, "As the *chakora* bird to the moon..."

daily and, sitting on the veranda, produce a few pages of the manuscript, for which he was paid in rice, dal, and other food. He was a poor man, and the elder Subudhi still recalls with amazement that someone so humble could produce elegant pictures. Apparently he had no other source of support, and he may not have had any descendants. At least none can be traced in Mundamarai today. <sup>4</sup>

The two neighboring Subudhi families say that Ulu Chakra made palm-leaf books in their possession. These include a *Gīta Govinda* and an *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* bound together, an *Ushābhilāsha* (bound with a *Daśapoi*, which is by another hand), and a *Lāvanyaavatī*. The first three are problematic early works, the last a fine example of his mature style, as discussed in Chapter II. None bears a colophon that gives us his name in any form.

The problem arises that four manuscripts preserved elsewhere do cite his name as Raghunath Prusti. These colophons are discussed below in Chapter III in connection with their dates. In brief, a second *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* now in Nuagaon describes him as the son of an oil-man. A *Śobhāvatī* also in Nuagaon is fragmentary, but the colophon giving the name of the scribe and the place where he worked survives. The Bhubaneswar *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa* describes him as belonging to the caste of *baḷadiā teli*, "oil-man using bullocks," from Mundamarai.

Finally, a musical work, the *Saṅgīta Dāmodara* now in the Orissa State Museum in Bhubaneswar, describes Raghunath Prusti as belonging to the

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<sup>4</sup>On our last visit, in June, 1987, some conflicting evidence turned up about this, for one member of the Prusti community claimed that Raghunath and Ulu Chakra were brothers and that the latter had several descendants. Since this informant contradicted himself several times and was not supported by others in Mundamarai, we are inclined not to take his words at face value.

caste of *haḷadiā teli* , "oil-man dealing in turmeric," from Mundamarai in the taluq of Dharakot. This manuscript was in fact bought in that village in 1936 by the great Oriya musicologist, Kali Charan Patnaik, whose autobiography provides a tantalizing glimpse of the artist's world:

When I was in Dharakot, I gathered information that there was a village called Mundamarai two or three miles from the palace and that in the house of Raghunath Prusti, a Haḷadiā Teli of that village there were some palm-leaf *pothis* (books) written and illustrated by him. My Dharakot stay was truly a divine blessing.

I went to Mundamarai and located Raghunath Prusti's house. Raghunath Prusti had been dead for years. In his family, only Sāriā, an eighty-year-old lady, was alive. She had no sons. With great difficulty I met her through the good offices of some villagers and with some guile made her acquaintance and became her god-son. I used to travel from Dharakot to Mundamarai every day and tried to gain her confidence through gifts.

One day in her *pūjā* room I found a number of sandal-paste smeared *pothis* in the *pothi* stack, and with her permission I went through them and discovered the illustrated *rāga-chitra* manuscript. I cannot express in words my happiness then. After cajoling my god-mother a great deal, I got hold of the *pothi*. <sup>5</sup>

In Mundamarai today, the name Raghunath Prusti is not particularly connected with any manuscripts. In the village there are members of the *baḷadiā teli* caste, but no *haḷadiā teli*; since both are clearly written in

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<sup>5</sup>Kali Charan Patnaik, *Kumbhāra Chaka* (in Oriya, "Potter's Wheel"). Cuttack: 1975, 258-9.



different colophons, it is possible that no distinction between these subcastes was made in the past, although one may represent an error. On the whole, the stylistic connection between the works preserved there and those with colophons, as well as the mention of Mundamarai in the colophons makes it most probable that Ulu Chakra and Raghunath Prusti are one and the same.

Our picture of this artist as a person is enriched in various ways by this local evidence. In the first place, he was strongly rooted in a particular place. Given the dispersion of manuscripts throughout Orissa, one might imagine that such a person moved around from court to court. In the case of the eighteenth-century poet/scribe/illustrator Brajanātha Baḍajenā, we know that he indeed travelled from his home in Dhenkanal to the states of Keonjhar and Darpani, to Calcutta, and possibly to Andhra, working at various courts.<sup>6</sup> On the other hand, virtually all the colophons of the late nineteenth-century illustrator Sarathi Madala Patnaik, discussed in Chapter IV, indicate that he worked in the village of Limikhandi in Ganjam District. The facts that of Raghunath Prusti's thirteen works, five were until recently kept in Mundamarai and that three colophons identify him as a native of Mundamarai demonstrate that he was firmly rooted there.<sup>7</sup>

In the second place, we have a sense of at least one kind of patron and of the artist's relation to them. These are businessmen, Vaiśyas like the artist

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<sup>6</sup>*Brajanātha Granthāvali*, ed. Sudhakar Patnaik. Bhubaneswar: Orissa Sahitya Akademi, 1965, p. ix.

<sup>7</sup>It remains possible, of course, that some of the remaining works were done elsewhere, but at least the majority are linked to Mundamarai. In this we have a quite different situation from the painters of the Punjab hills, whose home was Guler but who worked predominantly for other courts. B.N. Goswamy, "Pahari Painting: The Family as the Basis of Style," *Marg*, Sept. 1968, 17-62.

himself although more affluent. We have other examples of works commissioned by businessmen, as well as by Brahmins and Rājās.<sup>8</sup> No doubt some more expensive illustrated manuscripts were made for ruling families. Nonetheless it is worth remembering that there was a continuum between different kinds of patronage, which is probably different from the predominantly courtly miniatures of Rajasthan. The image of poor Ulu Chakra sitting on the Subudhis' porch, working on his masterpieces and collecting his rations, also captures his relationship to the patron, who clearly respected his skill and independence, despite his poverty. Moreover it is interesting to know that he was paid in food. One other reference to the price of an illustrated palm-leaf manuscript occurs in the writing of the poet and illustrator Brajanātha Baḍajenā, who roughly a hundred years earlier indicated to the Rājā of Dhenkanal that he should be paid a hundred rupees to produce a *Gīta Govinda* with pictures.<sup>9</sup>

It is also worth noting that one fine manuscript remained in the artist's own home, although we cannot really know why this was kept. Did a potential customer renege? Did the artist or his family choose to own this particular work? The description quoted above of Prusti's aged female heir and the stack of *pothis* in her *pūjā* room conveys the original setting in

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<sup>8</sup>J.P. Das, *Chitra-Pothi: Illustrated Palm-Leaf Manuscripts from Orissa*. New Delhi: Arnold Heinemann, 1985. 42-3.

<sup>9</sup>*Brajanātha Granthāvali*, ed. Sudhakar Patnaik, 575. On the one hand, Brajanātha was clearly someone of higher pretensions than Raghunath Prusti. On the other hand, Prusti's mature works are arguably finer than Brajanātha's, discussed below in Chapter IV. We also know in one case that an un-illustrated manuscript was exchanged for a windowframe, and that another was sold for a rupee and a quarter (Das, *Chitra-pothis*, 36).

which many manuscripts were seen and the almost talismanic reverence in which they were held.

Finally, in the case of Raghunath Prusti, we see an exceptional Vaiśya artist. Illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts were sometimes the work of Brahmins and sometimes of Karanas, the predominant scribe caste of Orissa equivalent to Kayasths elsewhere.<sup>10</sup> It would seem that the copying and illustration of palm-leaf manuscripts was taken up, not as an inherited profession but rather as an avocation by various literate individuals. It is thus possible that the talented son of a poor vendor, who might have used writing to keep accounts, would have blossomed into a skilled artist. This situation differs from some kinds of painting that were clearly the work of particular *jātis* --for instance the Chitrakāras of Orissa. In Rajasthan and the Pahari area, families of painters can likewise be traced, often from *jātis* that began as Śudras and were later Sanskritized to quasi-Brahmin status. At the same time, there are a few cases of artists whose forefathers were not artisans.<sup>11</sup> Thus this is yet another example of flexibility within the caste system. Certainly one is grateful that the maverick Raghunath Prusti was not compelled to sell oil and was appreciated by the well-to-do citizens of Mundamarai for the illustrated manuscripts he produced.

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<sup>10</sup>Karana artists include Sarathi Madala Patanaik and Brajanātha Baḍajenā. Brahmins include Dhanañjaya and Michha Patajoshi. Some names such as Ramakrishna Dasa could belong to either caste. Das, *Chitra-Pothi*, 37-44.

<sup>11</sup>For example, Nadim, the favorite artist of the Mughal courtier Abd ar-Rahim was the son of a defeated Rajput (M. Mahfuzul Haq, "The Khan Khanan and His Painters, Illuminators and Calligraphists," *Islamic Culture* 1931, 329-47). Likewise the famed Kishangarh painter Nihal Chand was the great-grandson of an emigre from Delhi who had served as *diwan* under a previous Mahārājā of Kishangarh (E. Dickinson and K. Khandalavala. *Kishangarh Painting*.. New Delhi: Lalit Kala Akademi, 1959, 15).



## CHAPTER II

### RAGHUNATH PRUSTI'S WORKS

The works of this artist can be divided into three general phases. This chronology is not merely a goal in itself, or an explanation for the difference between early and late images. It is particularly interesting because we can see the gradual development of an artist's style--the unfolding of his skill and his movement from guidance by others toward a distinctive idiom of his own. We see him as an actual person rather than as a frozen abstraction. While such development can be traced for the painters who worked at the Mughal court, it has rarely been studied in a traditional Hindu context.

#### A. Prusti as Pupil

1. *Gīta Govinda*, private collection, New Delhi (Pls. 1-3).<sup>12</sup>
2. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* (*Kṛipāsindhu Janāṇa*), private collection, New Delhi (Pls. 4-9).<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>12</sup>9 leaves, each illustrated on both sides. 19.3 x 4.2 cm. Purchased from Chinari Kamaraju Subudhi in Mundamarai, 1987. This is an incomplete version of the text.

<sup>13</sup>15 leaves, all but the last illustrated on both sides. 19.3 x 4.2 cm. Bound together with the *Gīta Govinda*.

3. *Ushābhilāsha*, Chinari Kamaraju Subudhi collection, Mundamarai (Pls. 11-13).<sup>14</sup>

4. *Ushābhilāsha*, Orissa State Museum, OL 25 (Pls. Pls. 14-18, Colour Pl. B).<sup>15</sup>

These early examples bear only a tenuous resemblance to Raghunath Prusti's later oeuvre. In fact it is primarily the fact that the people of Mundamarai in 1987 identified the first three as Ulu Chakra's work (along with the more characteristic late *Lāvanyavatī*) that led us to consider them at all. Moreover the elements that are not Prusti's go off in two different directions, suggesting a formative stage when he was guided by different teachers, which further complicates our grasp of his identity.

The first two works, forming a composite *pothi* or palm-leaf volume, show Prusti strongly influenced by an established illustrator. The writing of the initial *Gīta Govinda* is not his. Here small, vertical letters end in straight horizontal tails, creating a regular effect on the page. The writing of the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* that follows is, however, our first example of Prusti's own hand: slightly larger than the last, emphatically rounded, and ending with a diagonal lower tail that doubles back with a flourish.

In the illustrations of this *pothi*, however, there is no break, and it would seem that Prusti was responsible for the pictures of both portions. The *Gīta Govinda* follows the standard iconography found in numerous versions

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<sup>14</sup>25 leaves, bound together with 12 leaves of *Daśapoi* (Pl. 10). 27.5 x 4.4 cm.

<sup>15</sup>9 leaves, 16 sides of which are illustrated. 29 x 4.6 cm. It was collected in 1965 from a lecturer at Khallikot College, in Ganjam District.

of this text executed by Ramakrishna Dasa.<sup>16</sup> For example, the first page of these invariably shows one or two cows followed by Nanda, Kṛṣṇa, and Rādhā who has set down her jar on the wall of a tank, beneath a central storm-cloud (Plate 1, cf. Plate 74). Comparing the two artists' treatment of this group, one is struck by differences between the very squat figures of Ramakrishna Dasa and the Raghunath Prusti's taller canon of proportions. At the same time, some details seem directly borrowed from Ramakrishna Dasa, never recurring in this form in Prusti's later work: the coarse textile pattern of overlapping semi-circles; or Nanda's long, flatly defined tunic. Likewise on the next page of the Mundamarai *Gīta Govinda*, we find Ramakrishna Dasa's characteristic treatment of the bower, forming a flat medallion, its leaves indicated against a darkened ground, to create a simple decorative effect that Prusti does not later go in for (Plate 2, cf. Plate 75). Here it seems likely that Prusti was working alongside a scribe of Ramakrishna Dasa's school, possibly Dasa himself, and that he was following a completed manuscript of the *Gīta Govinda*, also of that school. Given this derivative position, new touches in his work are particularly noteworthy. Even as a student, Prusti gives his demons aquiline noses and fanciful costumes that make Dasa's characters seem bland by comparison (Plate 3).

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<sup>16</sup>This artist, whose colophons do not tell us where or when he worked, has left the following *Gīta Govindas* : 1) Orissa State Museum, Ext 3 (Plate 74 here); 2) L. D. Institute, Ahmedabad; 3) National Museum, New Delhi, 74.81 (Plate 75 here); 4) private collection, New Delhi (Das, *Chitra-poṭhi*, 70); 5) New York Public Library, Spencer Collection 13. For versions of this text by other artists, see Kapila Vatsyayan, "The Illustrated Manuscripts of the Gita-Govinda from Orissa," in *Madhu: Recent Researches in Indian Archaeology and Art History*, Shri M.N. Deshpande Festschrift, ed. M.S. Nagaraja Rao. Delhi: Agam Kala Prakashan, 1981, 275-286.



The second text in this same *pothi* is the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, a poem Prusti illustrated again at a somewhat later age, which we will have occasion to compare with this early work done as an apprentice . Looking at the first version, it is impossible to be certain whether he was working from a model of the Ramakrishna Dasa school and again altering its details, or whether he was on his own, albeit strongly influenced by Ramakrishna Dasa. Certainly the placement of figures within medallions and the covering of architecture with undifferentiated textile patterns (Plates 4 and 5) are not characteristic of his later illustrations. The large heads of Duṣṣāsana and Sudāmā (Plate 6) look so much like Ramakrishna Dasa's figure type that it is easy to imagine Prusti borrowing them directly from a previous model.

The other early work that remains in Mundamarai is an *Ushābhiḷāsha* bound together with a *Daśapoi*. The texts of both poems are written in the same hand, which does not show Prusti's distinctively prolonged lower loops. Nor is this writing that of the *Gīta Govinda* just discussed, for it is more slapdash, leans slightly to the left, and has short, diagonal tails below the letters. Thus it would seem that an unknown scribe copied the entire text.

In this double-*pothi*, the style of illustration is not very distinguished throughout, but there is a break that suggests two different artists. The first, responsible for the *Daśapoi* (Plate 10) and the initial leaf of the *Ushābhiḷāsha* (Plate 11), shows little care in planning his work. Thus Ganeśa, who is customarily depicted on the first folio, is shown only by a sketch of his head, perhaps because there was no room to include the body without involving the artist in problems of overlap by the worshipper to the left. The pattern of Sarasvatī's dress "shows through" the heel of her right foot, as if the artist was not conscious of what form was intended. Such slips occur throughout the *Daśapoi*, for instance Kṛishṇa's misplaced testicles in Plate 10. The large

heads with noses often continuing the line of the forehead differ from the more carefully differentiated faces of the remainder of the *Ushābhiḷāsha*.

Thus we can hypothesize that an unidentified local scribe laid out the texts first, leaving blank spaces for pictures, as was often the practice in palm-leaf illustration. And after completing the first folio of the second work, he turned the pictures over to the very young Raghunath Prusti, who worked along the same lines but with increasing artistic precision. Prusti's style here shows fewer anomalies than do the *Gīta Govinda* and the *Artatrāṇa Chautiśā* just discussed, in comparison with his later work. For example, figures are not set into flat medallions, and architecture is articulated with separate bands of decor. The depiction of Ushā and Aniruddha in Plate 13 reveals the kind of specific observation in which Prusti later excels, as the lovers' motion causes the hanging couch to sway to the left. Their entwined anatomy is worked out with more logic here than in Plate 10 (the work of the unidentified predecessor), although even Prusti loses track of the location of Ushā's arms. One feels these erotic couples were regarded as a kind of formal challenge for the illustrator. In the *Ushābhiḷāsha*, the dotted textile patterns are those of the artist of the *Daśapoi*, but on the whole Prusti has borrowed less from that model than he did from the more assured if stereotypic Ramakrishna Dasa tradition in the *Gīta Govinda* and the *Artatrāṇa Chautiśā*. Perhaps the very ineptitude of the *Daśapoi* illustrator was a blessing in disguise, for it left Prusti to his own devices.

The final example of his apprenticeship, a second *Ushābhiḷāsha*, now kept in the Orissa State Museum, is not directly connected with either strain of influence (Plates 14-18, Colour Plate C). What survives is only a small portion from the middle of the text, and this seems to have been written by

two different scribes.<sup>17</sup> Thus folio 8v in the third line switches from irregular, left-slanted letters to Prusti's symmetrically rounded hand (Plate 17). The illustrations are, however, another and more consistent story. And here the cover of the *pothi* strongly resembles two later works, both identified as his by their colophons (Colour Plate B). These yellow boards, decorated with red flowers and delicately painted leaves, whether Prusti's own work or that of some other artisan in Mundamarai, stand out among the other book covers of Orissa. Most of these are plain or simply carved, although a few are painted with figures.

The drawing of the second *Ushābhiḷāsha* takes up where that of the previous three left off, in terms of assured treatment of the human body and development of several clear types of characters. There are occasional awkwardnesses, for example the dancer at the right end of Plate 16, but these are rare. The faces of beautiful women follow one pattern, distinct from that of heroic men, who in turn are distinguished from sharp-nosed demons (Plate 18). The latter can be compared with the demons of the *Gīta Govinda* (Plate 3) and the musicians of the Mundamarai *Ushābhiḷāsha* (Plate 12, although those are not demonic); Prusti's skill and inventiveness in treating these comic figures in non-Oriya dress grows progressively.

At the same time, there are anomalies that we will not see later, particularly in the overall composition of the pictures. For instance, some groups of figures are unusually large in scale and burst against the confines

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<sup>17</sup>Pp. 67-109 in the Priyadarśini edition of the *Ushābhiḷāsha*., Cuttack: Friends Publishers, 1971. Since the dimensions of this and those of the Mundamarai *Ushābhiḷāsha* are very close, and since the two texts do not appear to overlap, it is conceivable that they are parts of one work that have become separated, although as discussed below there are considerable differences of style.



of the folio (Pl. 16), whereas Prusti soon came to favour figures surrounded by ample space. Architecture is depicted with less concern for rational, rectilinear construction than is later the case. Thus in Plate 17 the recumbent heroine is framed by curving forms that suggest a tent or bower, although supported by columns. Plate 18 reveals how the artist worked out his buildings; perhaps he left this portion unfinished in dissatisfaction with the asymmetry of details in the second pavilion from the left or because a platform appears to be superimposed on the structure at the far right. While suggestions about the exact way in which this problematic work was produced must be speculative, it would seem that Prusti was not dominated by a visual model or teacher here, even though he collaborated with another scribe.

## B. Prusti as a Young Man

### 5. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* (*Kṛipāsindhu Jaṇāṇa*) Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon (Pls. 19-28).<sup>18</sup>

From this point on, all the texts discussed are entirely in Prusti's neatly rounded hand, suggesting that he was no longer an apprentice to some other scribe. The colophon of this work reads, "This book was written by Raghu Prusti, boy of a *teli* (oil-man)." This formulation is simpler than that of the three other colophons discussed in Chapter III, which situate Prusti more completely. In those he is called Raghunātha, a more honorific form of the name, and is said to be "of the caste (*jāti*) of oilman," rather than son or boy

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<sup>18</sup>16 leaves, all but the last illustrated on both sides, 22.4 x 5 cm. Sri Dasarathi Patnaik, who formed this important collection in Nuagaon, reported that this work was acquired in 1970 from Sri Alupati Baleya at Belaguntha, Ganjam District.

(*pilā*), a term that would probably not be used for a man over thirty years old. Thus we may assume that this precedes the remaining colophons. In fact, the style of illustration seems slightly different from that of all the following examples. At the same time, this represents a major advance over the previous student works.

This manuscript seems to follow the layout of the earlier *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, as if that were either physically accessible as a model or firmly engraved upon the memory of the artist.<sup>19</sup> In individual illustrations, the basic composition of the previous image is often retained, but refined and elaborated in ways that show the illustrator artfully improving upon his own model.

One of the most consistent compositions illustrates the verse, "As the *chakora* bird looks to the moon, as the *chātaka* to the cloud, as the fish to the water, [so the devotee to the Lord]." (Plates 7 and 19) Here the *chātaka* to the right is very similar, although in the second example its head is turned more sharply upward to the area labelled "cloud."<sup>20</sup> The *chakora* on the left has been shown in a less ungainly pose in the second work, and it has been

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<sup>19</sup>Both manuscripts appear to be complete. The Nuagaon one is slightly bigger in physical dimensions, as well as longer by one folio. Virtually all the subjects of the first work are repeated in the second. There are thirty-four verses in the text. The Mundamarai manuscript illustrates twenty-nine of these, and the Nuagaon manuscript illustrates thirty-one.

<sup>20</sup>The *chakora* can be identified as a kind of partridge (*Caccabis Chucar* or *Rubra*) and the *chātaka* as either Pied-crested cuckoo (*Coccyzus Coccyzus*) or common Indian Swift (*Cypselus Affinis*). G.C. Praharaj, *Pūrṇachandra Oḍiā Bhāṣhākoshā*. Cuttack: Utkal Sahitya Press, 1933, Vol. 3, 2487, 2607. Yet it would seem that these birds, with their mythic longings, were not considered to be actual, common creatures. In the two sets of captions, Prusti spells the names of these birds with several variants, as if they were not familiar to him.

somewhat differentiated from the other bird. But the most striking change is the increased emptiness of the second scene, which leads to one of Prusti's most haunting vignettes, evocative of the soul's longing.

In a second case, the pregnant doe confronts a hunter in the same general pose, but the entire scene is elaborated in the Nuagaon manuscript (Plates 8 and 20). On the one hand the artist apparently wished to increase her piteousness, for a fire and net trap her from behind, and the hunter has been provided with an unpleasant dog. On the other hand, sheer love of descriptive detail may lie behind the enlargement of the forest and the careful depiction of the scantily clad hunter, who in the first work might pass for a *rishi*.

Only occasionally is one struck by unsureness of proportion. For instance, in Plate 21 Draupadī is considerably taller than the evil Duḥśāsana who pulls at her sari, and her modestly bent head also suggests that she is constricted by the top of the palm leaf. Her face is quite long, whereas those of Ahalyā and Rāma to the left in Plate 24 have extremely high, rounded temples. Later Prusti was to regularize his ideal figures more consistently.

### C. The Mature Prusti

6. *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa*, Orissa State Museum, Ext 97(Pls. 29-33, Colour Pl. D).<sup>21</sup>

<sup>21</sup> 14 leaves, all but number 7 illustrated on one side only, 11.2 x 4.1 cm. The placement of the hole to one side of the leaf is rare. This has been published under the title *Mahāprabhu Jaṇāṇa* in Subas Pani, *Illustrated Palmleaf Manuscripts of Orissa*. Bhubaneswar: Orissa State Museum, 1984, 57-60, 67-68. The manuscript was acquired from S.C. Samant in Chikiti, southeastern Ganjam District.



7. *Saṅgīta Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, Ext 38 (Pls. 34-39, Colour Pls. E-G).<sup>22</sup>

8. *Lāvanyavatī*, largely in Abei Subudhi collection, Mundamarai; 10 leaves in Rietberg Museum, Zurich; 2 leaves in Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi, 10927-8 (Pls. 40-53, Colour Pl. H).<sup>23</sup>

9. *Sobhāvatī*, Nuagaon Library, ms. no. 1086; 5 fragments in a private collection, New Delhi (Pls. 54-61, Colour Pl. I).<sup>24</sup>

10. *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi*, New York Public Library, Spencer Collection, Ms. 11 (Pls. 62-68, Colour Pl. I).<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>15 leaves, all amply illustrated on both sides. 35 x 4.8 cm. This work is reproduced in full in Kali Charan Patnaik, *Rāga-Citra*. Cuttack: Odissi Kala Prakash, 1967. Its acquisition in Mundamarai is described above in Chapter I.

<sup>23</sup>Abei Subudhi reports that twelve pages were removed and the remainder disarranged, when it was borrowed for an exhibition in New Delhi in the 1950's. A portion toward the end of the story is incised but not yet inked. The pagination on completed pages goes up to at least folio 154. All parts measure ca. 32 x 5 cm. The Zurich portion was published by Robert Skelton, *Indian Miniatures from the XVth to XIXth Centuries*. Venice: Neri Pozza, 1960, 25-28. Also by Eberhard Fischer, Sitakant Mahapatra, and Dinanath Pathy, *Orissa: Kunst und Kultur in Nordost-Indien*. Zurich: Museum Rietberg, 1980), 248-9. Durga Prasad Patnaik has written that the illustrator of this book mentions his name as Raghunath Prusti ("Orissan Art," *Sidelights on the History and Culture of Orissa*, ed. M.N. Das. Cuttack: Vidyapuri, 1977, 485.) While we have been unable to find such a colophon in the manuscript, Patnaik's recognition that this is Prusti's work was perceptive.

<sup>24</sup>Original pagination on the Nuagaon section goes up to folio 55, although fewer leaves are actually preserved there, and the colophon is (partially) preserved in New Delhi. Ca. 40 x 4.5 cm. Dasarathi Patnaik of Nuagaon acquired this in Cuttack.

<sup>25</sup>23 folios, 21 with illustrations on one side. 8 x 3.5 cm. This was purchased from a dealer in Calcutta.

11. *Mahishāsuramardini*, Elvehjem Museum of Art, Madison, Wisconsin, gift of Mrs. Earnest C. Watson, 1976.16 (Colour Pl. J).<sup>26</sup>

12. Verses from *Gīta Govinda* in Oriya script, Orissa State Museum Ext 372 (Colour Pl. J).<sup>27</sup>

13. Verses from *Gīta Govinda* in Telugu script, National Museum, New Delhi, 72.115/1 (Pls. 69-70).<sup>28</sup>

The order in which these later manuscripts were made is not entirely clear. From their colophons, we do know that the *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa* precedes the *Saṅgīta Dāmodara* by three years. The *Lāvanyavatī* would seem to have been one of Prusti's latest works, to judge from the local legend that it was the work of an old man, as well as the fact that the final pages are unfinished. Thus we have some idea of the sequence of these three. As for the rest, it is hard to fit them into a general chronological progression, for they differ according to subject, format, and quite possibly the taste and affluence of the patron.

The *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa* is a Vaishṇava devotional poem like the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, with which it shares some specific subjects. Thus three versions of the Delivery of the Elephant King show Prusti's increasing inventiveness.

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<sup>26</sup>The three joined folios measure 18.8 x 12.2 cm. This was published by Pramod Chandra, *Indian Miniature Painting in the Collection of Earnest C. and Jane Werner Watson*. Madison: Elvehjem Art Center, 1971, 12. The reverse is covered and cannot be inspected.

<sup>27</sup>The two joined leaves measure 9.3 x 9 cm. This was acquired in 1966-7 in Bhanjanagar (formerly Ghumsar).

<sup>28</sup>The two joined leaves measure 10 x 9 cm. This was purchased in 1972 from a dealer in Calcutta.



16. *Ushābhiḷāsha*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Dancers.



17. *Ushābhiḷāsha*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Ushā.



18. *Ushābhiḷāsha*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Bāṇa and warriors.





20. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Pregnant doe and hunter.



22. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Gajendramoksha.



21. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Sudāmā Kauravas, Duṣśāsana, and Draupadī.

23. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Mahishāsuramardini.





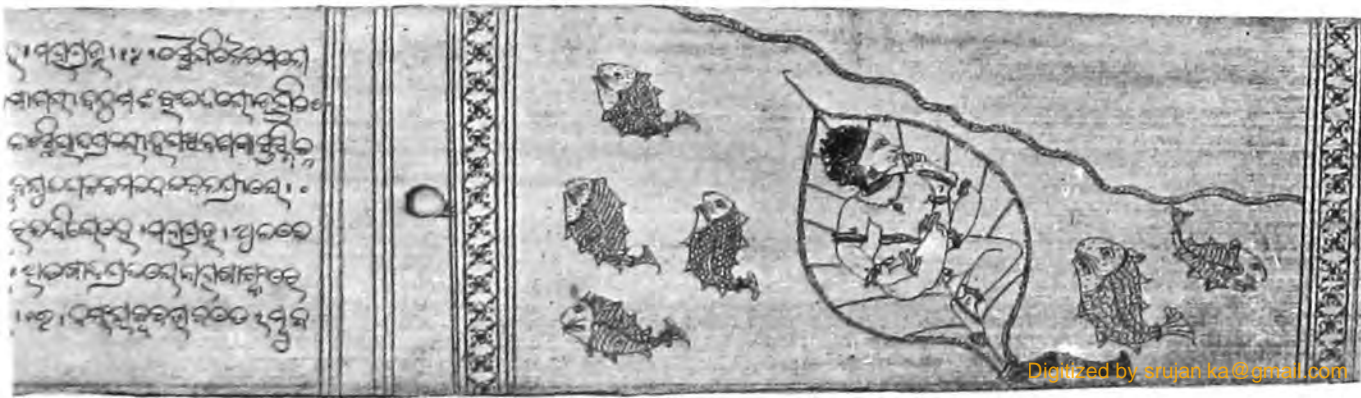


24. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Ahalyā, Rāma, Viśvamitra, Lakshmaṇa.

25. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Lord Jagannātha.



26. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Kṛishṇa appearing to Mārkaṇḍeya.







27. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Puri Temple.

28. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Gaṇeśa, Śarasvatī.



30. *Kuṇḍalī Janāṇa*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Gajendramoksha.



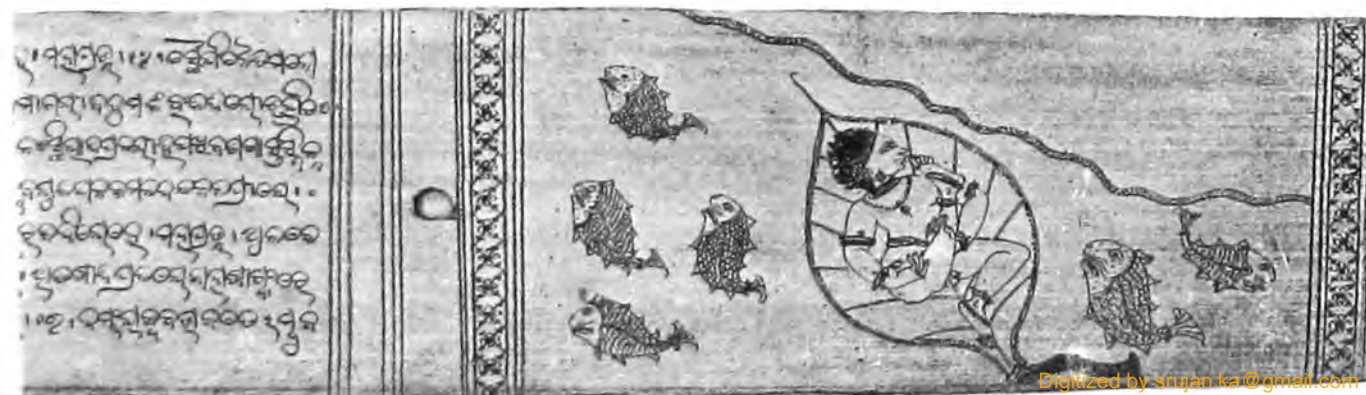


24. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Ahalyā, Rāma, Viśvamitra, Lakshmaṇa.

25. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Lord Jagannātha.



26. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiṣā*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Kṛishṇa appearing to Mārkaṇḍeya.





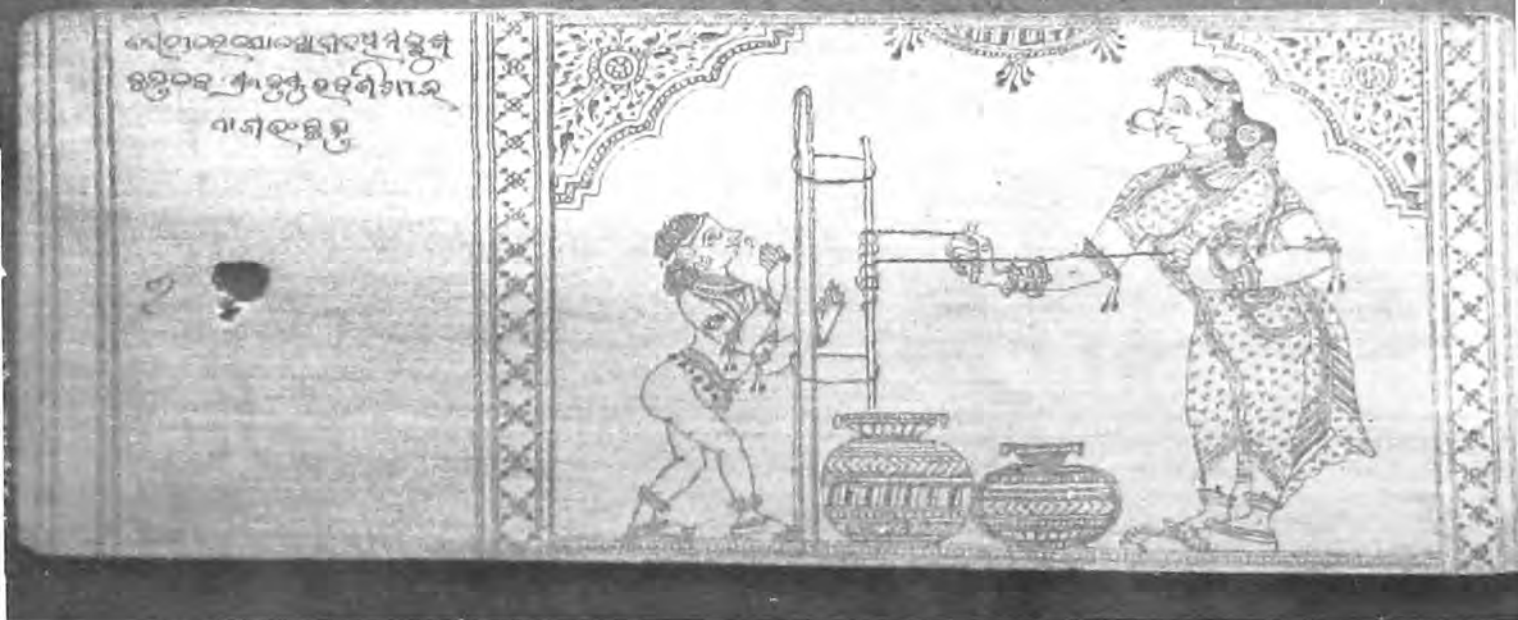


29. *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Brahmā and Śiva.

32. *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Snake, Viṣṇu on Garuḍa.







31. *Kuṇḍalī Janāṇa*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Yaśodā churning.

33. *Kuṇḍalī Janāṇa*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, *Kṛishṇa*, *Pūtanā*, and Yaśodā.





34. *Sangita Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Barāḍī Rāga.

35. *Sangita Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Māṣatikā Rāga.



The first (Plate 9) sticks to the bare essentials--the elephant attacked by a crocodile, and the wheel that Viṣṇu sends to deliver him. The second (Plate 22) adds Viṣṇu himself, on Garuḍa, as well as elaborating the setting with forms not mentioned in the terse verses of the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*; and the crocodile is placed between the legs of his victim, the two tails entwined. The third version (Plate 30) forms a more integrated composition of two complex units. Thus the tree on the bank in the previous scenes is held by Garuḍa (perhaps alluding to the Pārijāta tree uprooted by Kṛishṇa). Within each part, texture richly differentiates adjoining areas--dark pond, stippled crocodile, plain elephant. The neatly feathered wings of Garuḍa contrast with Viṣṇu's sash more crisply than in the previous work. In short, one sees Prusti continuing to grow.

Not all parts of this little manuscript are revisions of formulaic scenes. For instance, the image of Yaśodā and Kṛishṇa in Plate 31 shows the churn worked out with elegance and legibility in a way that is unique, not only among Orissan palm-leaf manuscripts but throughout Indian art. Prusti must have set out to depict this familiar device as clearly as possible. In Plate 32, a standard image of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa is juxtaposed with a serpent on a simple hill, dotted with holes, to convey the analogy that is central to the verse (see Chapter V below) in a poignant way.

This manuscript provides an interesting bit of evidence about the later use of palm-leaf *pothis*. On the back of one leaf is written in ink by a different hand from the text, the following note:

Year 1905, May 15. This *Janāṇa pustaka* became mine. Whoever takes it is a criminal. Sri Gangādhara P[r]aharāja Mahāpātra.

Here we have testimony to the continuing pride of possession by a succeeding owner.



The *Saṅgīta Dāmodara* is a different kind of text, a standard compilation of *rāgas*, or musical modes, in which the poem itself is less highly regarded than were the previous works. This may in part explain the less varied and descriptive nature of its illustrations. Moreover this follows closely the iconography of two other illustrated copies of this text, discussed below in Chapter V, which suggests that Prusti was working from another illustrated set. Hence while the quality of design is high, the number of inventive, individual touches is smaller than in his other mature works.

In this manuscript, a regular format is followed on all but the first and last folios, which show the traditional subjects of Gaṇeśa (Colour Pl. E, the cart festival, a temple (Colour Plate F), and the coronation of Rāma. Otherwise, we see two pictures per side, usually flanked by the more-or-less corresponding text. Often the composition is symmetrical and framed by architecture, as in Barāḍī Rāga (Plate 34). Yet even here one appreciates Prusti's touch in the irregular fronds of the fly-whisks or the neat patchwork pattern applied to a cushion that seems to be covered with striped *mashroo* cloth.

In exterior scenes such as Māḷasikā, Vasanta, and Ābhīrī Rāgas (Plates 35-37), the trees are treated flatly, creating patterns that do not quite "read" in spatial terms. Prusti seems to have been working from a fundamentally more decorative model than was his wont. Yet he also inserted whimsical birds and squirrels that break the patterns and evoke the charm of the forest. And exceptional *rāgas* such as Śrī Mādhavādī show his interest in distinguishing the three *munis* by not only pose but also the configuration of their matted locks of hair (Plate 38). Nonetheless, this manuscript on the whole sacrifices individual comment by the artist on his subjects to clarity and elegance of design.

The *Lāvaṇyavatī* in Mundamarai is in some ways Prusti's masterpiece. It is the longest work preserved, and its length is not merely a function of the text illustrated. The *Lāvaṇyavatī*, an elaborate *kāvya* by the great Oriya poet Upendra Bhañja, is in fact comparable to the *Ushābhiḷāsha* in length and general nature. But in illustrating Bhañja's work, Prusti has augmented the number of pictures in relation to the text. There is an unusually large proportion of full-page illustrations. In some sections each phrase in a passage has been accorded a separate picture. And in a few places noted below, a general description has been illustrated with details that do not appear in the text at all.

One might assume that such a lavish book, which moreover depicts palatial details, was produced for a courtly patron. In fact, this is a case in which we can be relatively sure from oral tradition of the patron's identity--the Subudhi family of merchants who still own the manuscript. It is worth underlining that artistic elegance need not be equated with a courtly context. The Subudhis remain deeply proud of the artistry of this work today, and such appreciation may have been sufficient encouragement (along with the food he received in payment) to induce Prusti to throw himself into this project. The sheer elaboration of the illustrations may also have been a way of eking out the commission, since he was apparently paid by the page, although this alone would not necessarily account for the quality of the work.

There is, admittedly, some repetition in the abundant compositions of this manuscript. For example, in the exhaustive description of the preparations for the wedding night of Chandrabhānu and *Lāvaṇyavatī*, scene after scene is set in a standard kind of architectural frame (Plates 44-45). And the worship of the sun by each is depicted with the same kind of hill,

birds, and setting, in the same way that the poem itself repeats a formula for the event.<sup>29</sup>

Yet given such formal regularity, there is also inventiveness here. Some compositions are unique among Prusti's known works--for instance the row of sail boats in Plate 48, different in structure and visual effect from the barges propelled by poles elsewhere in this manuscript and in the two versions of the *Ushābhiḷāsha*. Here he chooses to reduce the size of the figures, whose height is considerably smaller than his usual scale of approximately one half the width of the palm leaf.

A scene such as the worship of Rāma and Sītā in Colour Plate H shows the artist's versatility. On the left, the divinities and Upendra Bhañja are idealized, with similar aristocratic faces, although the poet is distinguished by his turban and Sītā by her dress and ornaments. To the right four worshippers are slightly larger in scale, vaguely suggesting that they are closer to the viewer, although this is not particularly called for by the poem. And these four are deftly distinguished in various ways. One slightly turns his head in three-quarters view, an innovation of Prusti within the predominantly profile figures of Orissan manuscripts. Hair-style differentiates the older Brahmin from the two sages and from the young disciple. And the paunch of the first differs from the leaner torsos of the rest, as does Upendra Bhañja's convex chest from the leonine torso of Rāma.

Many details throughout this manuscript show the illustrator's wit and interest in meticulous description. The offerings at the time of Lāvāṇyavatī's wedding include a picture of the baby Kṛishṇa floating on a leaf (Plate 44) that reproduces in reverse one which Prusti himself had made in the

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<sup>29</sup>Cf. Plate 42 here and Fischer, Mahapatra, and Pathy, *Orissa*, 550 top right.



Nuagaon *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* (Plate 26). The furniture is not only lovingly depicted, but it includes many Europeanate chairs that were not seen in the earlier works discussed so far. It seems unlikely that these were introduced specifically in response to this patron, for the Subudhi family today lives modestly and traditionally. Perhaps Prusti had seen such furniture at a court and found it appropriate to the setting of the *kāvya*. Other details are less exotic: the writing desk and inkstand in Plate 52 or the artisans and workers in Plate 50 represent ordinary rural Orissa. In short, while this seems to be a late work, made when the artist was an old man, he had by no means lost his physical or creative powers.

Another fascination of this manuscript lies in the fact that it is unfinished. One page, unnumbered and now placed at the beginning of the bundle, shows a group of women within a building, all fairly close to Prusti's characteristic drawing but worked out in less detail, as if he had yet to add the finishing touches (Plate 53). The ascetic standing outside the pavilion is yet more sketchy, and one can even imagine that it is the work of some follower. To the right are the traces of pencil sketches of dancing women, generally similar to those at the left, although it is conceivable that these were added later. This suggests that at some point, the procedure of design included preliminary drawing in pencil, followed by engraving with the iron *lekhani*, the engraving being inked in before it was completed in order to check on its progress. Also several pages at the end of the manuscript are partially engraved but not darkened. On these pages we see that the pagination and text labels were among the last parts to be added, although the text and pictures seem to have been laid out simultaneously.

The *Sobhāvati* resembles the *Lāvanyavati*, in part because both are elaborate poems by Upendra Bhaṅja, in part because they must have been

done in the same period of Prusti's career. Both use pictures lavishly and depict a luxurious world of ideal princes and foreign furnishings. The worm-eaten condition of the Nuagaon manuscript makes it hard to assess its original impact. But from the fragments that survive, one feels it may have been of at least as high a calibre as the Mundamarai manuscript. It is crowded with even more cunning pictorial touches that embroider the story. For instance, the hill in Plate 54 is filled with amusing fauna, including a mother bear nursing her cub in the center. We recognize at once that the attendant in front of Princess Śobhāvati in Plate 55 is unsympathetic, from her pointed nose, glowering eye, and subtly angular body. The clock on the table in Colour Plate I not only records a detail of the material culture of the period but also establishes that a love-letter is being written with passion, late at night.

One way in which the *Śobhāvati* excels the rest of Prusti's oeuvre is the complexity of the crowd scenes. This is partly a matter of the artist's delight in describing a variety of human beings. Thus in Plate 58 we see the culmination of his depictions of groups of musicians. Various instruments are lovingly recorded. No two players are alike in face or dress. The extremely tall conch player at the head of the band contrasts with the short man with cymbals in the center. Their tunics and churidars, buckling at the knees, like the gaudy costumes of modern bands, add to the sense of spectacle. The artist himself seems to participate in the fun.

The richness of crowd scenes here is also partly a matter of Prusti's mature pictorial skill in conveying space. In Plate 59, at least six rows of figures overlap, creating the illusion of a dense group. They are also remarkably clear, although not always pedantically logical. For instance, in this same plate, the raised trunk of an elephant toward the center is not

attached to any body. Such crowd scenes also serve to highlight those figures that are depicted in isolation. Thus Prusti explores the representation of the third dimension, not as an end in itself but as a way of increasing the human drama of the story.

The *Praśna Cūḍāmaṇi* is an exceptional manuscript, although it resembles the *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa* in its tiny scale and asymmetrical placement of the string-hole. The text of the *Praśna Cūḍāmaṇi* is basically utilitarian, a tool for prognostication that has no claim to literary stature. Hence its use must have been different from a work that was read over and over again by its owners. At the same time, it is hard to imagine from its immaculate condition that it was actually used by a roadside fortune teller as described below in Chapter V. Perhaps this elegant copy was made to be used by someone in the family or entourage of the patron on special occasions.

Because the line on the reverse of each page describes a person or animal and its portent, each picture shows a figure isolated, like a dream image. There is none of the spatial and compositional complexity of the last two manuscripts. And yet the rendering of these drawings is as delicate and inventive as any of Prusti's works, which suggests that this also belongs to his mature, final phase.

Some of the images have appeared in Prusti's previous work--for instance the deer (Plate 68), whose basic anatomy resembles those of the earlier *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśas* (Plates 8 and 20), as well as others in the *Saṅgītā Dāmodara* and the *Lāvaṇyavatī*.<sup>30</sup> Yet the *Praśna Cūḍāmaṇi* alone

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<sup>30</sup>Patnaik, *Rāga-citra*, 11. In the *Lāvaṇyavatī* summary of the *Rāmāyana*, the illusionary deer is similar to that in Plate 20 except that it has two heads and is male, unlike the doe required in the *Ushābhiḷāsha*. The three horizontal stripes that appear on the side are a frequent convention in Orissan pictures of deer.



eliminates the animal's spots, creating a particularly haunting, delicate creature. The Kāmadhenu or Wishing Cow in Plate 62 is not found so far in Prusti's other work, although it does occur elsewhere in Orissan paintings. Prusti endows this normally bovine creature with a bird's wings and tail, as well as a human hand in addition to the four legs of the cow; thus it also suggests the enigma of Kṛishṇa's manifestation as Navaguñjara, a subject particularly popular in Orissa.<sup>31</sup> This and the unusually graceful frontal face with its aloof gaze produce a haunting version of a stock image.

The human figures in this little work, like those in the other final manuscripts, alternate between idealized types and vivid individualization. Nārada in Plate 63 is extremely close to the sage in Colour Plate H, who similarly presents an arresting three-quarter view of the face. The Kirāta in Plate 65 is the culmination of a series of hunters (Plates 8, 20, Śabarās in the *Lāvaṇyavatī* ) which become progressively distinct from even the uncouth sages. Here the snub nose is clearly intended to represent an aboriginal physiognomy. The beggar in Colour Plate I represents the height of detailed, naturalistic observation in his wrinkled chest, gaunt adam's apple, pinched face, and straggling hair. If Raghunath Prusti was indeed a poor wanderer in his old age, one wonders whether the immediacy of this figure may not stem from self-portraiture.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Cf. *Aditi, The Living Arts of India*. Washington: Smithsonian Institution, 1985, frontispiece. For the Navaguñjara subject, see J.P.Das, *Puri Paintings* New Delhi: Arnold-Heinemann, 1982, 135-6.

<sup>32</sup>The dog is likewise a simple and yet more telling version of the slightly grotesque dog in Plate 20. The beggar's right hand has been shown with the thumb on the wrong side of the bowl it holds, a case of the inevitable tyranny of the engraved line, which cannot be erased.

The remaining three works are of a different genre from the previous palm-leaf books, for their few leaves are joined by threads to form a more-or-less square picture, unlike the usual long, horizontal format. The practice of joining leaves in this way goes back at least to 1832, the date of a manuscript of the *Vaidehiśā Viḷāsa* preserved in the Jubel Library in Baripada (Plate 76).<sup>33</sup> This format was standard for illustrations of the *Dasāvatāra* section of the *Gīta Govinda*, which have semi-circular areas joined on the surface bearing the text of the poem on one face and pictures of the *Avatāras* that are revealed when these flaps are turned over.<sup>34</sup> Pictures on joined palm leaves have become popular today as more attractive to modern taste than are books, which demand that the viewer read them. It may be that this entire genre is a relatively recent phenomenon.

The folding image now in Madison, Wisconsin (Colour Plate J), depicts *Mahishāsūramardinī*. Prusti made many images of this goddess, who regularly appears on the first folio of Orissan manuscripts (Plates 23, 40; Colour Plates C, F). In the early *Ushābhilāsha* (Colour Plate C), her face is long, the artist's round version of the ideal female physiognomy not yet having been developed. And there, while the ascetics standing in *tapas* to the side are distinctively Prusti's (cf. Plates 25, 38), their scale is large, like all figures in this work, and they are on a par with the goddess. In the middle-phase *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* (Plate 23), their scale is somewhat decreased, and the face of *Durgā* becomes a perfect circle. The Madison picture seems

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<sup>33</sup>This manuscript represents a complex combination of the traditional book with big compositions for some illustrations that extend over several leaves. The thread that originally joined the leaves is not always preserved. This manuscript is unpublished.

<sup>34</sup>Das, *Chitra-poṭhi*, 41-42.

closest to the *Lāvāṇyavatī* (Plate 40), further diminishing the attendants and introducing the lobes of a hill beneath the central group. Of course the greater height of this work gives scope for more complexity, and it is small wonder that female attendants are added in addition to the sages, or that the architecture is elaborated. On the whole, this work is consistent with Prusti's mature style.

The last two folding shrines likewise reproduce a type of iconic image of Viṣṇu seen frontally that had occurred regularly in the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*. Prusti's first version of this subject (Plate 4) contrasts with subsequent ones, for instance in the paw-like hands as opposed to his later rational definition of each finger. In later works, the frontal face in general is handled somewhat more adeptly, although often with the same slightly comical effect. The New Delhi shrine may be dated to the general period of the Nuagaon *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, the *Saṅgīta Dāmodara*, or the *Śobhāvatī* (cf. Plate 57). In the shrine now in Bhubaneswar, however, the comic effect is mitigated by the drawing of the eyes with a straight lower lid (Colour Plate J). This is not inherently more naturalistic, only more dignified, for the pupils of the eye are raised and their gaze does not cross. We have seen this same detail in the enigmatic Wishing Cow of the *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi* (Plate 62); perhaps that and the second shrine are close in date.

Both shrines set off the central divine image, or rather image of a statue of a divinity, with worshipping Brahmins engraved on the inner face of the doors so that they seem to approach the shrine at a slight angle. In general, the subject of Brahmins brings out Prusti's skills in describing thin cloth, fleshy torsos, and shaven heads. Here again, the New Delhi shrine is slightly more stereotypic in the treatment of these figures, which in the Bhubaneswar work becomes more three-dimensional, with subtly



differentiated treatment of the hair. This likewise connects this piece with the *Praśna Chūdāmaṇi* and *Lāvaṇyavatī*, presumably made in Prusti's final years. It is interesting that these two small shrines, with some elements of frame and architecture almost identical, differ significantly in the drawing of the figures.

The sheer delicacy of workmanship on both Viṣṇu shrines is breathtaking, including the crisply patterned architecture. The neatly cut doors, like a European triptych, turn the whole into a form that is more than a pictorial surface. One can imagine the pride of the owner of such a perfect, tiny object. And finally it is interesting that the same verses of the *Gīta Govinda* appear in Oriya script on one and in Telugu on the other, showing the complex environment in which Raghunath Prusti worked.

Thus looking back, we see an artist whose style changed from ineptitude, guided by various predecessors, to assurance, quite distinctive from his contemporaries. Glancing through the illustrations in this book, one might question offhand whether the same person could be responsible for the works in Plates 6 and 64. It is worth remembering that in the well-documented fields of European art, major painters go through equal transformations. It is hoped that the general sequence proposed here makes sense of this Orissan artist's development throughout his lifetime. If our suggestion is correct, that the *Lāvaṇyavatī*, the *Sobhāvatī*, the *Praśna Chūdāmaṇi*, and the Bhubaneswar Shrine were Prusti's latest works, his skill and genius showed no decline at that point. There is no evidence of waning eyesight. Nor did he fall into sterile repetition of previous work, even when similar compositions reappeared. One can only wonder what put an end to his career.

## CHAPTER III

### RAGHUNATH PRUSTI'S DATE

So far we have presented only a relative sequence for this artist's work, leaving it open when exactly he lived. Previous scholarship about this material places it between the early eighteenth century and the nineteenth. Since we feel strongly that these masterpieces indicate the vitality of Orissan culture late in the nineteenth century, it is worth examining with care the arguments about absolute chronology. Three kinds of documentary evidence are relevant--the dates given in the manuscripts themselves, the dates of the literature that is copied, and the dates of a few objects depicted in the illustrations. After discussing these we will turn in the next chapter to the chronologically less conclusive, if nonetheless more interesting, issues of Prusti's style and its place in the history of Orissan art.

#### A. The Colophons

We begin with these because they are the basis of the most precise date proposed so far for one manuscript, the *Saṅgīta Dāmodara*, which has been assigned to A.D. 1713. In brief, there are four colophons that mention the scribe, the first two of which do not, however, preserve a date.

1. The Nuagaon *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* concludes, (Plate 71)

"This book was written by Raghu Pṛuṣṭi, boy of a *teli* (oil-man)."

2. A fragment of the *Śobhāvatī* now in New Delhi reads, (Plate 72)

"... In the name of Māndhātā of Nuāgaḍa . . . . falling at your feet, I say. . . . in Mundamarai in the taluq of Dharakot . . . tha Pṛusṭhi, writer. . . . let there be no fault . . . . was completed.

3. The colophon of the the *Kuṇḍaḷi Jaṇāṇa* reads, (Plate 73)

"In the 29th *anka* of Mahārājā Śrī Divyāsīmha Deva, on the 7th day of the bright fortnight of Kārttika, on Friday, the Kuṇḍaḷi Jaṇāṇa of Kavisūrya was completed. Oh wise men, I speak, falling at your feet. Please find no fault with the scribe Raghunātha Pṛusṭhi, belonging to the caste of *baḷadiyā teli* (oil-man using bullocks), from the market town of Mundamarai."

4. The first leaf of the *Sangīta Dāmodara* reads,<sup>35</sup>

"Written in the 33rd *anka* of Mahārājā Śrī Divyāsīmha Deva on the 7th day of the dark fortnight of Jyaishṭha, on the 3rd day of the week. Oh learned ones, falling at your lotus feet, I ask that you not find fault with Raghunātha Pṛusṭhi, belonging to the caste of *haḷadiyā teli* (oil-man dealing in turmeric), who lives in the market town of Mundamarai in the taluq of Dharakot."

Let us begin with the last of these. The colophon of the *Sangīta Dāmodara* gives three pieces of chronological information. It was completed--

- a. in the 33rd *anka* ( = 27th year)<sup>36</sup> of Mahārāja Divyāsīmha Deva
- b. on the 7th day of the dark fortnight of Jyaishṭha
- c. on the 3rd day of the week (i.e. Tuesday).

<sup>35</sup>Reproduced in K. C. Patnaik, *Rāga-citra*, p.1.

<sup>36</sup>*Ankas* correspond to regnal years, except that there is no *anka* numbered 1, 6, 16, 20, 26, 30, 36, 40, 46, 50, 56, 60, 66, 70, 76; or 80. Thus year 1 of a reign = *anka* 2, year 10 = *anka* 12, and so on.

Three rulers of the Khurdha royal family, overlords of this whole area, were named Divyasimha Deva. This manuscript has been ascribed to the reign of the first by the noted Oriya historian Kedarnath Mahapatra, who deduced from the colophon a date of A.D. 1713.<sup>37</sup> This solution poses immediate problems, however, for Mahapatra here asserts that Divyasimha's reign began in 1687/88, which would yield a date of 1714/15. Elsewhere the same scholar gave 1689 as the accession date, which is in fact generally accepted, yielding 1716 for the 27th regnal year.<sup>38</sup> In 1714, 1715, and 1716, the 7th day of the dark half of the lunar month of Jyaishṭha did not in fact fall on a Tuesday, ruling out all of these possible dates.<sup>39</sup>

What then are the alternatives? Divyasimha Deva II is eliminated because his reign (1793-98) did not last for 27 years. Divyasimha Deva III came to the throne in 1859/60. In 1878/79 he was convicted by the British of the murder of a sadhu and was transported to the Andaman Islands, where he died in 1887.<sup>40</sup> The last circumstance has led to the assumption that he too is

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<sup>37</sup>K.C. Patnaik, *Rāga-citra*, 10.

<sup>38</sup>Kedarnath Mahapatra, *Khurudha Itihāsa*. Bhubaneswar: Government of Orissa, 1969. There is real uncertainty about the precise dates of many Khurdha rulers.

<sup>39</sup>In Orissa, the lunar month is reckoned between full moons (the *pūrṇimānta* system), which does indeed mean that for 1713, the 7th day of the dark half of Jyaishṭha falls on Tuesday. L.D. Swamikannu Pillai, *An Indian Ephemeris*. Madras: Government of Madras, 1927, Vol. VI, 228, 230, 232, 234. Cf. Karen L. Merrey, "The Hindu Religious Calendar," in *Religious Festivals in South India and Sri Lanka*, ed. Guy Welbon and Glenn Yocum. New Delhi: Manohar, 1982, 2-3.

<sup>40</sup>Prabhat Mukherjee, *History of the Jagannath Temple in the 19th Century*. Calcutta: Firma KLM, 1977, 342-83.



ruled out for this colophon, since he did not actually reign for 27 years. In fact, however, there are instances of colophons dated in the Hijra or standard Muslim era with years that correspond to A.D. 1880 and 1885, which also include Divyasimha's *ankas*.<sup>41</sup> Apparently local sympathy for this ruler, who was popularly thought to have been framed by the British, led to the continued reference to him *in absentia*. If it is his reign that we are discussing, the date would be 1886, and in that year indeed the 7th day of the dark half of Jyaishṭha falls on a Tuesday. Thus this interpretation makes more sense of the colophon of the *Sangīta Dāmodara* than does any other possibility.

The *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa* likewise gives three pieces of chronological information about the date of its completion:







- a. the 29th anka (= 24th year) of Mahārāja Divyasimha Deva
- b. the 7th day of the bright fortnight of Kārttika
- c. Friday.

These three circumstances again do not concur in 1710, 1711, 1712, or 1713, as would be required if this referred to the reign of Divyasimha Deva I. Nor do they concur in the year 1883, the 24th regnal year of Divyasimha III, if he came to the throne in 1859/60; b and c are however true in 1882, his 24th regnal year if he ruled from the Hindu year 1858/59. The latter argument may seem somewhat tendentious, yet the following section rules out the possibility of the reign of Divyasimha Deva I (or II) for this particular manuscript.

<sup>41</sup>K. Mahapatra, *A Descriptive Catalogue of Oriya Manuscripts*. Shantiniketan: Visva Bhararati, 1983, 4-5 (*anka* 31 = *sana* 1292 = A.D.1885); 117 (*anka* 25 = *sana* 1292 = A.D. 1880).

## B. The Literary Texts and Writing

In case one doubts the interpretation of these colophons, one might consider the date of the composition of the literary works illustrated by Prusti. Most are inconclusive, for they had been written well before the early eighteenth century, as is discussed in Chapter V. The *Lāvanyavatī*, the *Śobhāvatī*, and the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* would have been newly composed when Prusti copied them, for both Upendra Bhaṅja and Dīnakṛṣṇa Dāsa are ususally thought to have begun their careers early in the eighteenth century. But the gravest problem is created by the *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa*. Its author, Kavisūrya Baladeva Ratha is known to have been born in 1789.<sup>42</sup> Clearly this manuscript, whose colophon mentions the 29th anka of Divyasimha Deva, could only have been copied under the third ruler of that name, in the 1880's.

In addition to the date of the texts illustrated, what about the handwriting? Rough dating of manuscripts is often based upon palaeographic criteria. Indeed there are some archaic letter and numeral forms in many manuscripts that are unfamiliar to the modern reader. In fact, these continue to occur in manuscripts whose colophons, using the Hijra or the Christian eras, place them squarely in the twentieth century. Thus Prusti uses the older form of a,  as well as the more modern . His hand, consistent from the fourth work discussed in Chapter II onward, is regular, with neatly rounded forms for the upper part of most letters. The tail is prolonged and given a downward hook at the end, so that  becomes . This trait, and the subscript  and  produce a distinctive series of

<sup>42</sup>Mayadhar Mansinha, *History of Oriya Literature*. New Delhi: Sahitya Akademi, 1962, 135.



36. *Sangita Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Vasanta Rāga.

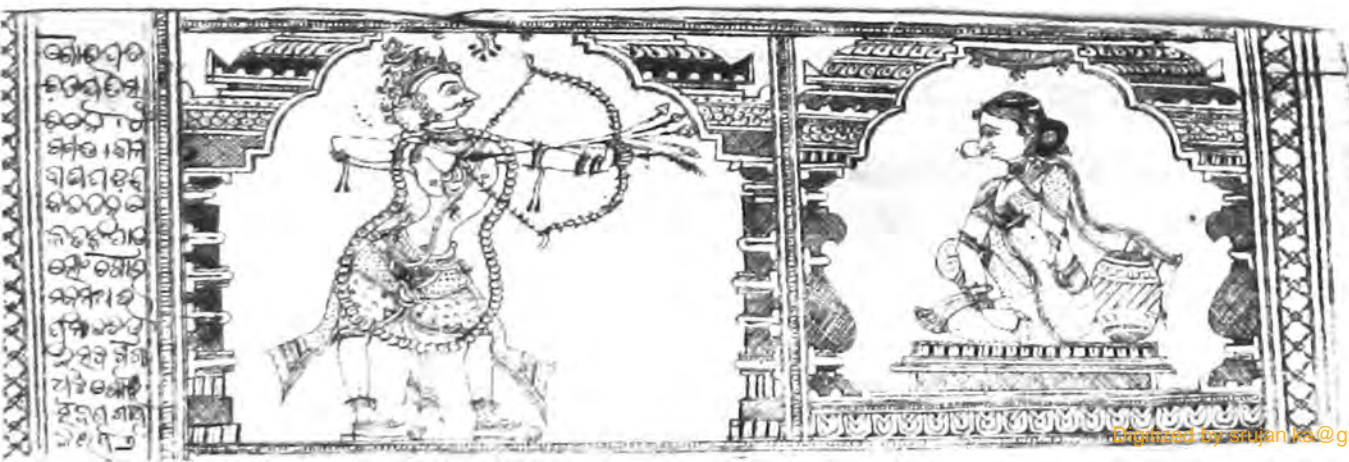
37. *Sangita Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Ābhīrī Rāga.





38. *Sangita Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Śrī Mādhavādī Rāga.

39. *Sangita Dāmodara*, Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar, Gauḍī Rāga.







40. *Lāvanyavati*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, Gaṇeśa. Sarasvatī.  
Mahishāsuramardinī.

41. *Lāvanyavati*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, Mahādeva visits Ushā.



42. *Lāvaṇyavatī*, Rietberg Museum, Zurich, *Lāvaṇyavatī* rises to pray to the sun for a husband.



43. *Lāvaṇyavatī*, Rietberg Museum, Zurich, Chandrabhānu's arrival at the house of *Lāvaṇyavatī* and welcome by her brother.



44. *Lāvanyavatī*, Rietberg Museum, Zurich, *Lāvanyavatī* prepares for her wedding night; gifts carried to the shrine of Rāmachandra.



45. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Rietberg Museum, Zurich, *Lāvanyavatī* prepares for her wedding night.



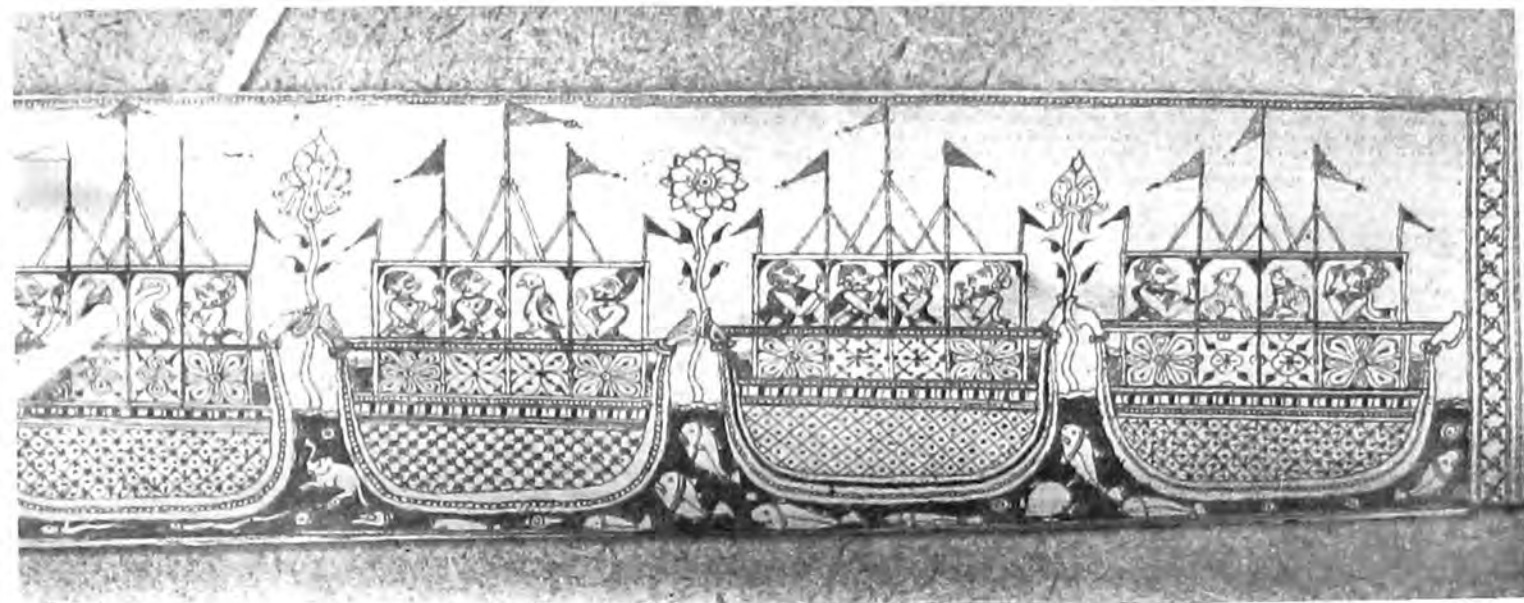


46. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, Chandrabhānu looks at pictures of beautiful women.

47. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, female musicians.







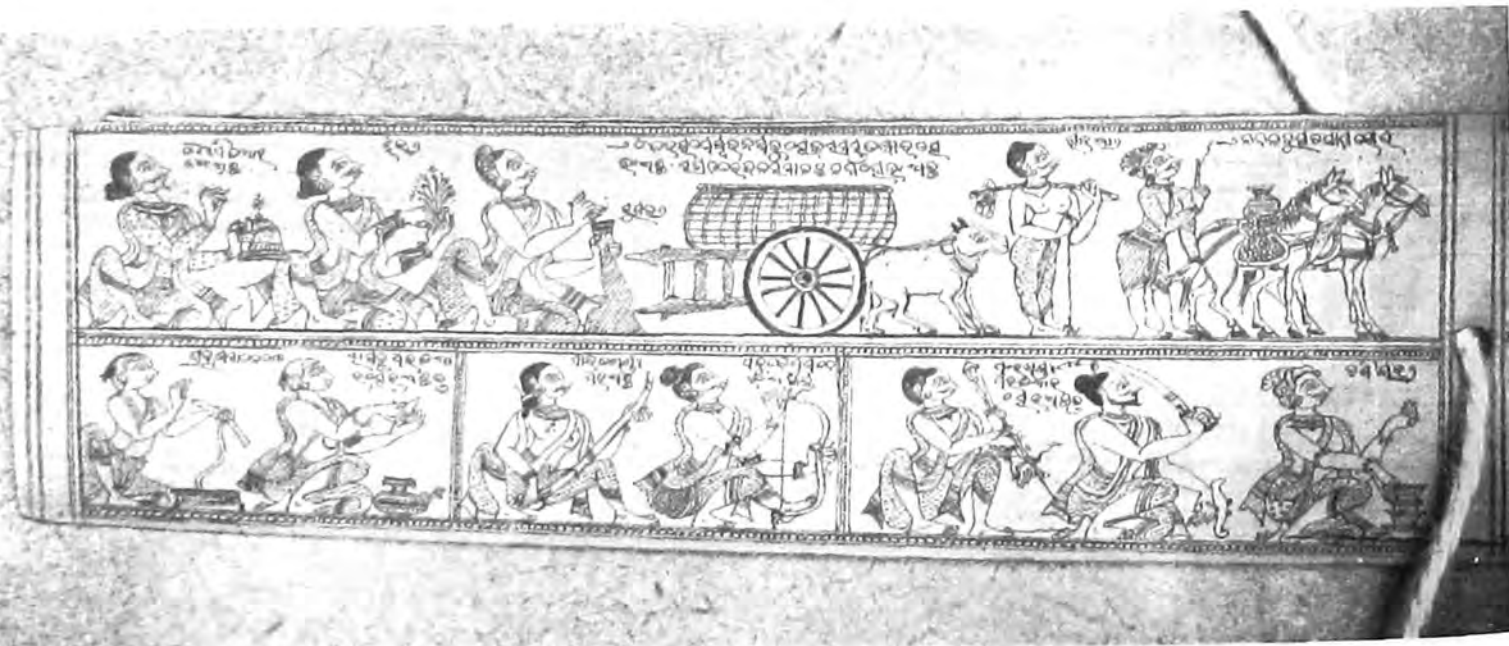
48. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, boats.

49. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, magic performers rewarded.





53. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, half-finished page.



50. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, preparations for Chandrabhanu's trip to Ramesvara.

calligraphic flourishes across the page. But this would stand out as much in the early eighteenth as in the late nineteenth century and has no bearing on the date of the manuscripts.

### C. The Subjects Depicted

Most of what is shown in the illustrations cannot serve as hard evidence for their date, for it reflects a traditional life-style that survived from the sixteenth century onward. In Orissa, changing forms of dress in response to influence from the outside do not provide chronological guideposts as is possible in the painting of north India. A few details, however argue in support of the later interpretation of the colophons.

In the first place, there are several Europeanate objects--a clock, and furniture--which are certainly more to be expected in the nineteenth century than before, when Orissa came under the control of the East India Company. In particular, the revivalist style of some furniture in the *Lāvanyavatī* and the *Śobhāvatī* (Plates 42, 45, Colour Plate I), delicate in design and including both Classical and vaguely Egyptian details, is distinctive of the English Regency Period, 1810-1820. This provides an additional *terminus post quem* for these manuscripts, which lack dated colophons. A time lag of sixty years for the import of such furniture into Orissa and its reflection in pictures is reasonable if not mandatory.

Finally, the images of the Puri Temple in both the Bhubaneswar *Ushābhilāsha* (Colour Plate C) and the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśa* (Plate 27) provide one more confirmation that these works cannot belong to the early or even middle eighteenth century. Both depict a column in front of the Lion Gate, to the east of the temple, which in the first is labelled *Aruṇa stambha*. In fact this column, not a normal part of a Vaishṇava shrine, was brought from the

Sun Temple at Konarak to Puri in the last decade of the eighteenth century.<sup>43</sup> Thus we have another *terminus post quem* for two early examples of Prusti's work.

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<sup>43</sup>Manmohan Chakravarti, "Certain Unpublished Drawings of Antiquities in Orissa and Native Circars," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal* IV (June, 1908), 303. The *Mādaḷā Pañji* says that the pillar was brought in the reign of Divyasimha Deva II, 1793-98 (Prachi Edition, 81). G.C. Tripathi and Hermann Kulke, *Kaṭokarājavamśāvali*. Allahabad: Vohra Publishers, 1987, 113. It does not follow that maps of Puri lacking the *Aruṇa stambha* must precede the late 18th century, for such an element may of course be omitted, either carelessly or purposefully for design.



## CHAPTER IV

### PRUSTI AND OTHER PALM-LEAF ILLUSTRATORS

In discussing Prusti's style so far, we have compared his works primarily with each other in order to trace their development, and briefly with his initial model, Ramakrishna Dasa. It remains to consider their consistency, that is Prusti's distinctive characteristics. For this, his style must be set against the background of others who worked in the palm-leaf medium. It would make sense to focus on other works of the late nineteenth century, particularly from southern Orissa, as most comparable to his. In fact, we shall see considerable diversity here, and the resemblances are not always greater than to illustrations known to be considerably earlier. Moreover, the dates of many major palm-leaf manuscripts from Orissa have not been firmly established. Thus it seems fair to range rather widely in comparing Prusti's work with that of others illustrators.

First, let us give a brief sketch of what we do know about the general development of artistic style in this medium. The earliest illustrated manuscript from Orissa for which a firm date has been adduced is a *Gīta Govinda* with commentary, called *Sarvāṅga Sundarī*, preserved in the Orissa State Museum, Bhubaneswar (Colour Plate K). This work of a Brahmin scribe named Dhanañjaya is rich and assured in design, remains resolutely two-dimensional, and bears some heavily painted areas, although these may

have been painted by a later hand.<sup>44</sup> The next securely dated example is a *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in the collection of the Department of History at Sambalpur University, whose illustrations were completed by the writer Brajanātha Baḍajenā in 1799 (Plate 86).<sup>45</sup> The figure style of this work is generally similar to Dhanañjaya's, remarkably so, considering that the two are over 100 years apart, although Brajanātha's work is less firmly stylized. The next landmark is a *Vaidehīśa Viḷāsa* from Baripada, dated to 1832, whose rough drawing and large-scale compositions would be idiosyncratic in

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<sup>44</sup>Ext 166. Jeremiah P. Losty, *The Art of the Book in India*. London: British Library, 1982, 137. Stuart Cary Welch, *India*, New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art, 1985, 62. Pani, *Illustrated Palmleaf Manuscripts*, 19-22. Das, *Chitra-poṭhi*, 38. Some doubt remains about the interpretation of this colophon, which uses an unusual combination of solar and lunar dates. It says the work was completed in the 39th anka (= year 32) of Mukunda Deva, on the *pratipat* (= first day after full moon) of the dark half of the month, on a Thursday, when the sun was in Kanyā. The last three facts occur in 1689, hence the general assertion that the manuscript is dated to ca. 1690. Yet Mukunda I was probably succeeded by Divyasimha I at some point in 1689, as discussed in the previous chapter. The alternative assignment to the reign of Mukunda III is possible in 1916, if his reign is counted from 1884, during the exile of Divyasimha III. This date might lead one to expect some signs of modernity, which are, admittedly lacking, although one must also admit that the manuscript is in extraordinarily good condition if it dates from 1689. The writing is inconclusive. Another work surely by the same hand is a *Rādhākṛishṇakeli Kathā* in the British Library, Or. 11612 (Losty, *op. cit.*, 137) (Pl. 77).

<sup>45</sup>P.K. Mishra, *The Bhāgavata Purāṇa--An Illustrated Oriya Palmleaf Manuscript, Parts VIII-IX*. New Delhi: Abhinav, 1987. This is an unusual case in which we know that scribe and illustrator differed, for the colophon specifies that the writing was done by Brajanātha's son and the illustrations by the poet himself.

any period (Plate 76).<sup>46</sup> While many interesting works have been assigned to the sixteenth through the eighteenth centuries on the basis of their archaic style, it may be wise not to regard these as secure dates.<sup>47</sup>

In the late nineteenth century we know that several quite different artists were at work in eastern Ganjam District, all independent of each other. Thus in Limikhandi, within the state of Badakhemundi, a Karana artist named Sarathi Madala Patnaik, churned out many works between 1878 and 1908 (Plates 79, 80).<sup>48</sup> Although he was a contemporary of Raghunath Prusti and worked some twenty kilometres away, Sarathi Madala's style is worlds apart, sketchy and inept in representational terms. His work is equally distant from a *Lāvṇyavatī* probably dated to the late nineteenth century, whose artist and place of origin are unknown

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<sup>46</sup>See above, footnote 33. This work is unusual not only in its use of adjoining leaves for a single scene but also because the text is placed in circular balloons, and because some illustrations are oriented at right angles to the length of the folios. Two other works that share these characteristics are an unpublished Kṛishṇa manuscript in the Department of History, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar and four leaves depicting Rāma in the Rietberg Museum, Zürich (Fischer et al., *Orissa*, 254 bottom).

<sup>47</sup>These include the *Amaru Śataka*, ascribed to the sixteenth or seventeenth century, also from the Baripada area: Stella Kramrisch, "Hundred Verses of Amaru Illustrated," *Journal of the Indian Society of Oriental Art* VIII (1940), 225-240; Sitakant Mahapatra and Dukhishyam Pattanayak, *Amarusatakam*. Bhubaneswar: Orissa Lalit Kala Akademi, 1984. Also a *Bhāgavata Purāṇa* in the British Library has been assigned to the early eighteenth century: Jeremiah P. Losty, *Kṛishṇa, A Hindu Vision of God*. London: British Library, 1980 (Pl. 86).

<sup>48</sup>Das, *Chitra-poṭhi*, 37.

(Plates 81, 82).<sup>49</sup> The crisp stylization of figures in this manuscript, more simple and geometrical than Prusti's, is as "archaic" as in many works that have been assigned on the basis of style to the eighteenth century.

Finally, we have a reference in 1928 to a Brahmin artist in a village in Khallikot, who specialized in illustrating the *Vaidehīśa Viḷāsa*; this surely is Michha Patajoshi, two of whose versions of this poem survive.<sup>50</sup> This artist's work, while somewhat sketchy, has a narrative verve and inventiveness that is quite different from that of Sarathi Madala Patnaik, who worked nearby (Plates 83, 84). Thus a picture emerges in Ganjam between 1870 and 1930, of quite diverse traditions, produced by artists of different castes, none necessarily trained in palm-leaf manuscript-making as a craft, and each working in an independent style. Given the fact that these are not hereditary artisans who pass down stylistic traditions, we are reluctant to invoke a putative stylistic development as a basis for dating Prusti's work, especially since other criteria provide a more secure foundation. Nonetheless, his pictures can be compared to the various styles that have just been rapidly surveyed.

To begin with the overall design, the sense of spacing in Prusti's works from the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* onward differs from many Orissan illustrated manuscripts. Air surrounds the figures, which are relatively

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<sup>49</sup>National Museum, New Delhi, 72.165. I. The writing is remarkably close to modern printing, although *a* occurs in the older form. A colophon dated 1305 in the Hijra era (=A.D., 1898) was mistakenly ascribed to this work in Williams and Das, "Raghunātha Pṛṣṭi," 140.

<sup>50</sup>Kulamani Das, *Kavyatirtha, Kavisurya Granthāvalī*. Cuttack: Cuttack Publishing House, 1977, 10th ed., 9. The work illustrated here has a colophon dated A.D. 1914, that in Pl. 83 to 1926.



small in scale. They do not press so expansively against the constricting form of the palm leaf as is often the case. At the same time, the figures are composed in units, set apart by texts and borders, by natural scenery, or by architecture. Some scenes include several interknit textural units, for example Plate 42 contrasts a densely inhabited hill with a flock of birds flying toward it and empty space that surrounds the heroine as she prays to the sun. Thus there is an unusual variety and sense of conscious artistry in these compositions.

In the second place, the quality of Prusti's drawing is distinctive. The medium of palm leaf as it is used in Orissa does not lend itself to variation in the width of line, for each mark is first incised with an iron stylus that must break through the horizontal fibers in order to produce a channel that will subsequently be inked. Nonetheless Prusti's work after his initial apprenticeship does show some variation in the thickness of line, both in writing and in pictures. Animals are generally accentuated with hatching along the edges that serves both as shading and as indication of their pelt (e.g. Plate 20).<sup>51</sup> Similar hatching occasionally occurs where it clearly is not hair but rather defines the volume of the figure as well as texture, for example the dhoti of the warrior in the *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi* . (Plate 66). There is extreme refinement in detail, striking in the beggar of Colour Plate I or the textile patterns of all the later works. Most remarkable is the distinction between crisp, regular lines and wobbly ones, as in the Brahmin Sudāmā at the left of Plate 21. This draftsmanship differs from that of a second refined manuscript of the *Lāvanyavati* ; by comparison with Prusti's varied drawing,

<sup>51</sup>Eberhard Fischer, "'Hair" and "Shading" in Paintings from Orissa,' *Rūpa Pratirūpa: Alice Boner Commemoration Volume*, ed. Bettina Baumer. New Delhi: Biblia Impex, 1982, 183-185.

here almost all the lines have a nervous quality (Plate 85, Colour Plate L).<sup>52</sup> It is characteristic that all the works of Prusti lack any colour, whereas the second, dispersed *Lāvanyavatī* produces its effects by means of light washes of various hues.<sup>53</sup>

In the depiction of human figures, Orissan illustrations generally differentiate certain major types. Prusti's work is exceptional in the number of these types, and the occasional differentiation of individual figures within one type. A fine example of the latter is the group of musicians in the *Śobhāvatī* (Plate 58). While all nine wear the same general kind of loose Maratha turban, tight pyjamas, and kurta, no two are alike in the exact configuration of turban or dress. Tall and short musicians contrast, with comic effect. Beards and facial expressions differ in a remarkably un-stereotyped way, unlike Michha Patanjoshi's more repetitive version of a similar group (Plate 83).

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<sup>52</sup>This manuscript has generally been ascribed to the eighteenth century, on the basis of its high artistic calibre; the nineteenth century seems equally possible. A large portion is in the National Museum, New Delhi (nos. 62.616a-g; 63.126/1-16). Other leaves are in the British Museum (1963-1-1); the Metropolitan Museum; the Jagdish and Kamla Mittal Museum, Hyderabad; the Elvehjem Museum, Madison, Wisconsin, (Chandra, *Indian Miniature Painting*, 10-11; Colour Plate L here); and various private collections, e.g. S.C. Welch, *Indian Drawings and Painted Sketches*. New York: Asia Society, 1976, 31-32.

<sup>53</sup>It is worth noting, however, that not all the colouring of Orissan manuscripts is original. In some the colouring is concentrated on only a few pages, e.g. the British Library *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Or. 11689 (Pl. 86; Losty, *Krishna*, 16-31). In Dhananjaya's *Gīta Govinda*, not only is this the case, but the colouring also at times covers a finely engraved pattern beneath, which is hard to explain if the same artist did both (Colour Pl. K).

One element here is of course variety in pose and position of the head. Throughout palm-leaf manuscripts, a profile face is the rule, yet there are exceptions that go back to what have been considered early examples. This should not be surprising in the larger context of Indian painting, for the rigidly stylized Jain works of the fourteenth century regularly employed a frontal view for iconic images, as did works produced under the Lodi Dynasty.<sup>54</sup> The three-quarters view of the head of course prevailed in much Persian painting and had become current in India in Sultanate and particularly Mughal art. Thus it is not inherently implausible that the artist Dhanañjaya should have employed a few three-quarter views, even if he worked in A.D. 1690 (Colour Plate L).<sup>55</sup> The British Library *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, generally archaic in style, includes a large number of frontal heads (Plate 86). Among recent palm-leaf illustrators, Sarathi Madala virtually never departed from the profile, whereas Michha Patanjoshi frequently interjected frontal views (Plate 83).<sup>56</sup> Except in the case of figures in worship, which acquire a certain static dignity, the face seen from the front often looks a bit out of place, suggesting startled surprise.

Prusti seems to have used the frontal view as much as any other Orissan illustrator. For instance in the relatively short *Saṅgīta Dāmodara*, it

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<sup>54</sup>Karl Khandalavala and Moti Chandra, *New Documents of Indian Painting—a Reappraisal*. Bombay: Prince of Wales Museum, 1969, figs. 14, 18, 34, Pl. 25.

<sup>55</sup> Also S. Pani, *Illustrated Palmleaf Manuscripts*, 22 (center).

<sup>56</sup>Other manuscripts that are consistently in profile are the *Amaru Śataka*, Brajanātha Baḍajenā's *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, and the works of Ramakrishna Dasa, whom we have associated with Prusti's early style. The 1832 *Vaidehīśa Viḷāsa* includes frontal heads occasionally, and the 1898 *Lāvanyavatī* frequently.

occurs five times for non-iconic figures.<sup>57</sup> The symmetry of a frontal face is used in Prusti's work for gods such as the seated Viṣṇu (Plates 4, 70) to suggest the stability of a statue. The pose is also used frequently for sages, who may be compared to gods. Prusti also favours frontality for lovers, in particular the woman, whose slightly crossed gaze conveys an intensity of feeling (Plate 57). And finally he uses frontal and angled views to introduce variety, within group scenes (Plates 18, 58, Colour Plate H) or among the similar separate images of the *Praśna Cūḍāmaṇi*. Throughout his career, Prusti develops the device of viewpoint, varying the angle of view to create some images that are skillfully foreshortened (Plate 63, Colour Plate H), and experimenting with the drawing of the frontal eye to depict a penetrating gaze (Plate 62, Colour Plate J).

Likewise Prusti handles the poses of his figures freely, with assurance in design (unlike Baḍajenā's ineptitude in Plate 78) and yet less contortion than the very stylized bodies of the *Lāvaṇyavatī* in Plates 81 and 82. His canon of proportions is tall and slender, with heads not as large as in many of the comparative works illustrated here. Yet the feet of Prusti's figures, which follow a consistent formula (ankle-bone indicated with a flourish that resembles his own writing, toes generally not foreshortened) are relatively large in proportion to the rest of the body.

Brahmins--heads shaven except for a distinctive tuft, plump, bare-torsoed--played an important role in many of the texts in Orissa. Prusti depicted their facial features carefully even in his earliest works (Plate

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<sup>57</sup>The copy of this same text in the National Museum, New Delhi (no. 72.111, Pls. 90, 91)), employs frontal faces for only two non-iconic figures, both sages.



6), going on to elaborate the marks decorating their bodies and their soft cotton garment that falls in wavy folds (Plate 21). Moreover his later works often differentiate between a paunchy older Brahmin and a youth whose chin bears no stubble, or between two whose hair follows subtly different configurations (Plate 61). This approach differs from a manuscript in which Brahmins figure prominently, the *Brahma Rāmāyaṇa*, where they are drawn with great assurance but as if cast from a single mould (Plate 87).<sup>58</sup>

Sages--bearded, long-haired, scantily clad--presented our artist with an opportunity to depict the human body in complex poses of penance (Plates 25, 38). Their matted locks are not always twisted in a knot, but sometimes fall in waves (Plate 38 right), sometimes curl (Plate 46 left), and sometimes fan out.<sup>59</sup> Again, this contrasts with the relatively standardized *rishi* type of most other artists (Plates 80, 88).

In Prusti's hands, demons are distinguished by their physiognomy, mainly by an extremely long, aquiline nose (Plates 3, 18, 33). This contrasts with the treatment of some Orissan illustrators, such as Ramakrishna Dasa, whose bland little demons can be recognized only by their warriors' dress and the context in which they confront gods. At the same time, Prusti's demonic figures remain human, albeit villainous. For example, Pūtanā in Plate 33 is an exaggerated version of the facing Yaśodā. And in the same way in Plate 55, Śobhāvatī's delicate and long nose is subtly differentiated from the slightly longer, hooked version of her unsympathetic attendant.

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<sup>58</sup>This unpublished manuscript is the property of the Daśāvatāra Maṭha, Jajpur. Its date may be nineteenth century.

<sup>59</sup>K.C. Patnaik, *Raga-citra*, 21 (where Kāmodi Rāga is also differentiated in the girth of his torso from the thinner Śrīmadhavadī).

This approach contrasts, on the other extreme, with that of a second *Ushābhiḷāsha* in Bhubaneswar, whose demons with beaked proboscis seem to belong to a separate, non-human genus (Colour Plate M).<sup>60</sup>

Royal characters wear costumes ranging from a Hindu version (dhoti, bare torso, crown) to a Muslim one (pyjama, kurta, late Mughal turban with regular folds protruding behind), including various combinations of the two types. The Muslim costume is used for demons, but not exclusively for them, witness Plate 43. Often kings in Muslim dress wear a beard. Despite these variables, there is a standard heroic facial type, round in outline and with the eye relatively small so that the temples arch conspicuously. The small pupil surrounded by the white of the eye on all sides produces an intense, beady expression, which distinguishes Prusti's faces from the more dreamy version of, for example, Dhanañjaya (Colour Plate K). All of these characteristics are less striking in the early works but become standard with the Nuagaon *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*.

Women follow the royal male facial type, with obvious differences of hairstyle and ornament. A nose ring is generally worn on the side of the nostril, although a smaller one may hang in the center, as is the custom today in southern Orissa. The dress is consistently a sari, worn without a blouse in the first two works, although after that the blouse becomes the rule, unless partial undress is indicated.

The images of specific divinities are extremely consistent from the Bhubaneswar *Ushābhiḷāsha* onward. Thus Prusti's Gaṇeśas are broad-

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<sup>60</sup>This manuscript, Orissa State Museum OL 23, is reproduced at length in S. Pani, *Illustrated Palmleaf Manuscripts of Orissa*, 41-47. It is probably nineteenth century and may have some circuitous relationship to Prusti's work; cf. the woman poling the boat in Plates 14 and 89.

faced, with horizontal eyes and head slightly tilted to the side, giving a benign and even jaunty effect (Plates 28, 40, Colour Plates C, D, F). This contrasts with the pinched, staid versions of Plates 77, 88, and 93, whose eyes are turned more vertically. Prusti's Gaṇeśas all hold aloft an ankuśa and a serpent, with no attributes in the lower hands, whereas other illustrations of the god usually hold a simple noose aloft, and a rosary and tusk below.

Prusti's images of Durgā slaying the Buffalo Demon (Plates 23, 40, Colour Plates C, F, J) consistently show the goddess with four arms, turning to our right, and confronting the still living demon so that their two gazes connect with dramatic electricity. This iconography was used by other artists (Plate 93), but differs from the eight-armed type of Plate 88, looking off to the left, smiling in triumph over the demon who has already collapsed. It is possible that each artist based such an image on a sculpture with which he was familiar, but it remains significant that the result differs both in details and in overall impact.

Perhaps animals appear in Prusti's works no oftener than in those of other artists illustrating the same repertoire of texts. At least he seems to include many creatures that are not explicitly required by the story. It adds to the intimacy of the scene in Colour Plate I that a parrot is perched above. Clearly the artist enjoyed detailing the hair of the scruffy, comical camels in the back of Plate 59. Some of his animals are distinctive, for example the fish that writhe not only in their broad contours but also in the curves that define the internal parts of their body (Plates 7, 19, 22, 26, 30, 48, and 54). These differ from the more placid fish of many artists, including Brajanātha Baḍajenā's dramatically swelling piscine creations (Plate 78).

Within the context of Orissan pictorial traditions, Prusti's outdoor scenes create a considerable sense of space, which is not to imply that he set

out to create illusionistic landscapes. Even in his earliest work (Plate 1), one branch of a tree crosses over another, unlike its prototype in the work of Ramakrishna Dasa (Plate 74). Subsequently, Prusti's vegetation is never as decorative and patternized as the elegant forms we see in Plates 87 and 89. In the drawing of hills, he follows a convention of overlapping lobes that is widespread in Orissan pictures (Cf. Plate 85, Colour Plate K ).<sup>61</sup> And yet even here there is variety between pointed (Plate 37) and rounded lobes (Plates 41, 42, 54) and in the way the lobes are outlined.<sup>62</sup> The contrast between scenes of sun-rise in Prusti's *Lāvanyavatī* and the Jajpur *Brahma Rāmāyaṇa* is striking. The former follows a more stylized convention for the hill itself, yet the reduction of scale and three-dimensionality of individual parts create a sense of an actual scene (Plate 42). The anonymous artist of the *Brahma Rāmāyaṇa* prefers a more ornamental surface, the sun forming a cypher that is part of the hill, which in turn lies in the same plane as the surrounding arabesques of vegetation (Plate 87).

Finally, architecture is important in Prusti's work, not only in the quantity of its depiction but also in the care with which its quasi-solidity is developed. In his earliest work (Plate 5), one pattern overlaps a large part of the roof, contradicting the suggestion of the contours that this forms a vaulted superstructure. Thereafter one can trace Prusti's accommodation of the

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<sup>61</sup>This is followed also in the nineteenth century wall paintings of Buguda, Puri, and Srikurmam. Dinanath Pathy, *Mural Paintings in Orissa*. Bhubanesvar: Orissa Lalit Kala Akademi, 1981, Pls. 9-11, 40. Fischer, Mahapatra, and Pathy, *Orissa*, fig. 582. A rare example of a different convention for hills is the *Amaru Śataka*, which depicts rocks that curl at the top as they do in the relief friezes of Konarak (Mahapatra and Pattanayak, *Amarusatakam*, verse 92).

<sup>62</sup>The *Sobhāvatī* employs both pointed and rounded lobes for hills.



detail of the exterior of such roofs to their form, so that by the late works each band of petals or diaper pattern serves also to foreshorten that course of the structure (e.g. Plate 69). In the Bhubaneswar *Ushābhiḷāsha* one sees this literally being worked out in an unfinished page (Plate 18). The contrast between the depiction of the Puri Temple in that manuscript (Colour Plate C) or the Nuagaon *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* (Plates 15, 27) and the anonymous *Ushābhiḷāsha* (Colour Plate M) is instructive. While the basic configuration is very similar, the unknown artist deployed the vertical bands on the *śikhara* in perfectly straight lines, whereas Prusti curved his at the top and added a diagonal pattern to the *āmalaka*, giving volume to the whole. In the same way, the long straight banners that fly from the temple in Colour Plate M flatten out the design, whereas those in Plate 27 are shorter, more varied, and less obtrusive. Thus even such a formulaic composition, in which Prusti may well have followed the earlier model, is easier to read as a depiction rather than as a conventional map.

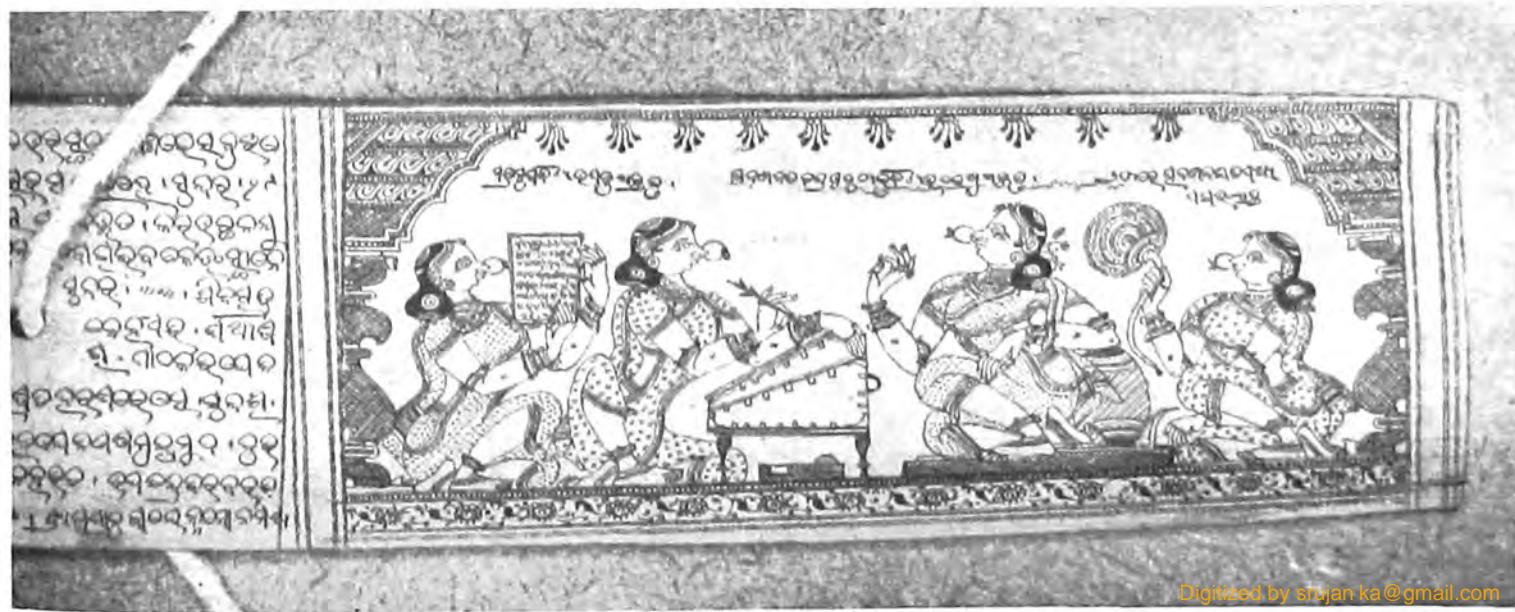
Thus on the whole, Prusti stands out among Orissan illustrators, both contemporary and earlier, in the care and conviction with which he renders his subject-matter. It is worth repeating, however, that his goal was hardly illusionistic visual description for its own sake. As the last two chapters suggest, particular aspects of his literary subjects appealed to him, and he embroidered the stories in the process of re-presenting them. His concerns were both prescriptive (involving ideal types), and descriptive of some parts of the reality around him. Moreover he remained aware of aesthetic standards, no doubt intuitively rather than at an intellectual level; this is part of what distinguishes him from his contemporary, that other lively storyteller, Michha Patājoshi (Plates 83, 84). Prusti's designs remain clearly

balanced on the two-dimensional palm-leaf, even though they suggest movement beyond this, both physical and imaginative.



51. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, women arranging their hair.

52. *Lāvanyavatī*, A. Subudhi collection, Mundamarai, *Lāvanyavatī* writing a letter to Chandrabhānu.







54. *Sobhāvati*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, sunrise.



55. *Sobhāvati*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, *Sobhāvati* and attendants.





56. *Sobhāvati*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Prince of Kashmir.

57. *Sobhāvati*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, lovers.

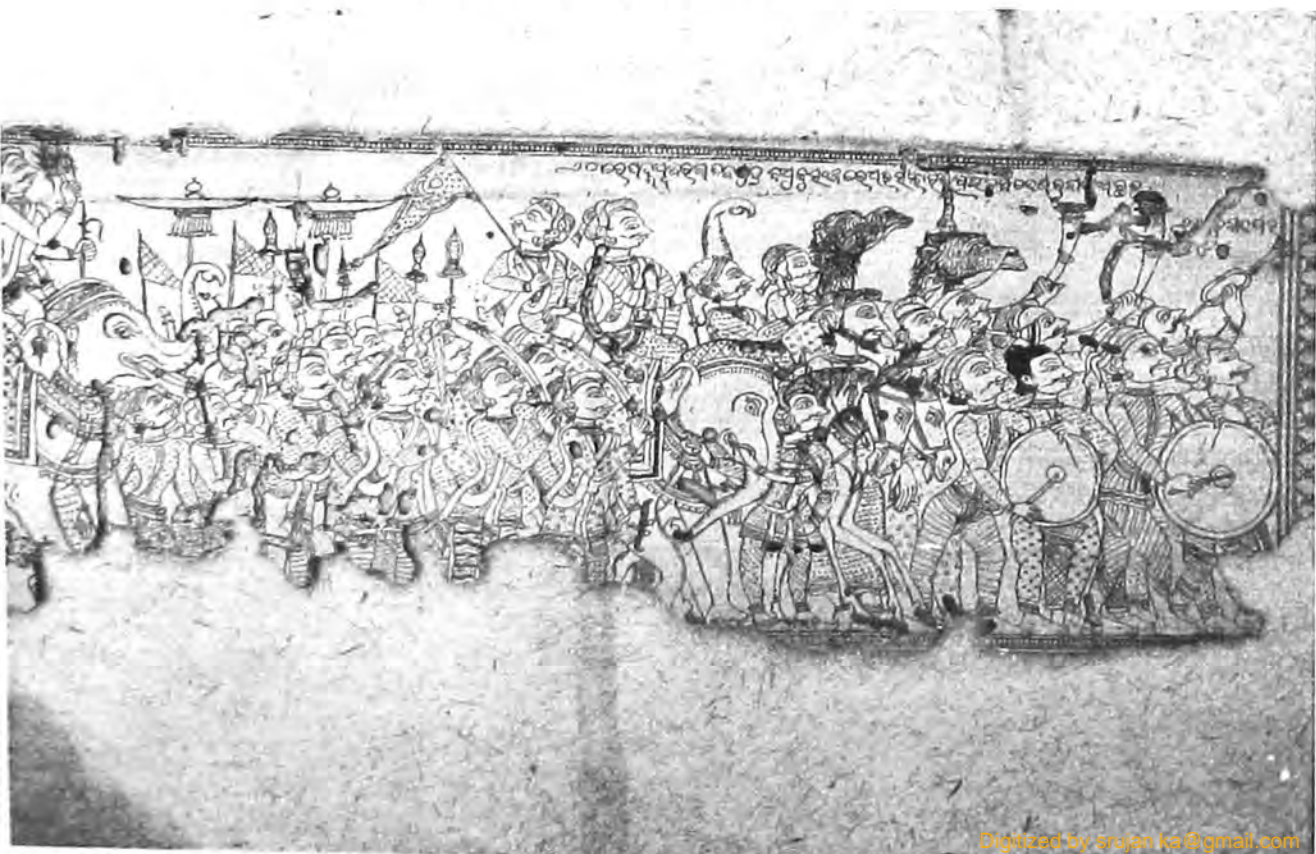




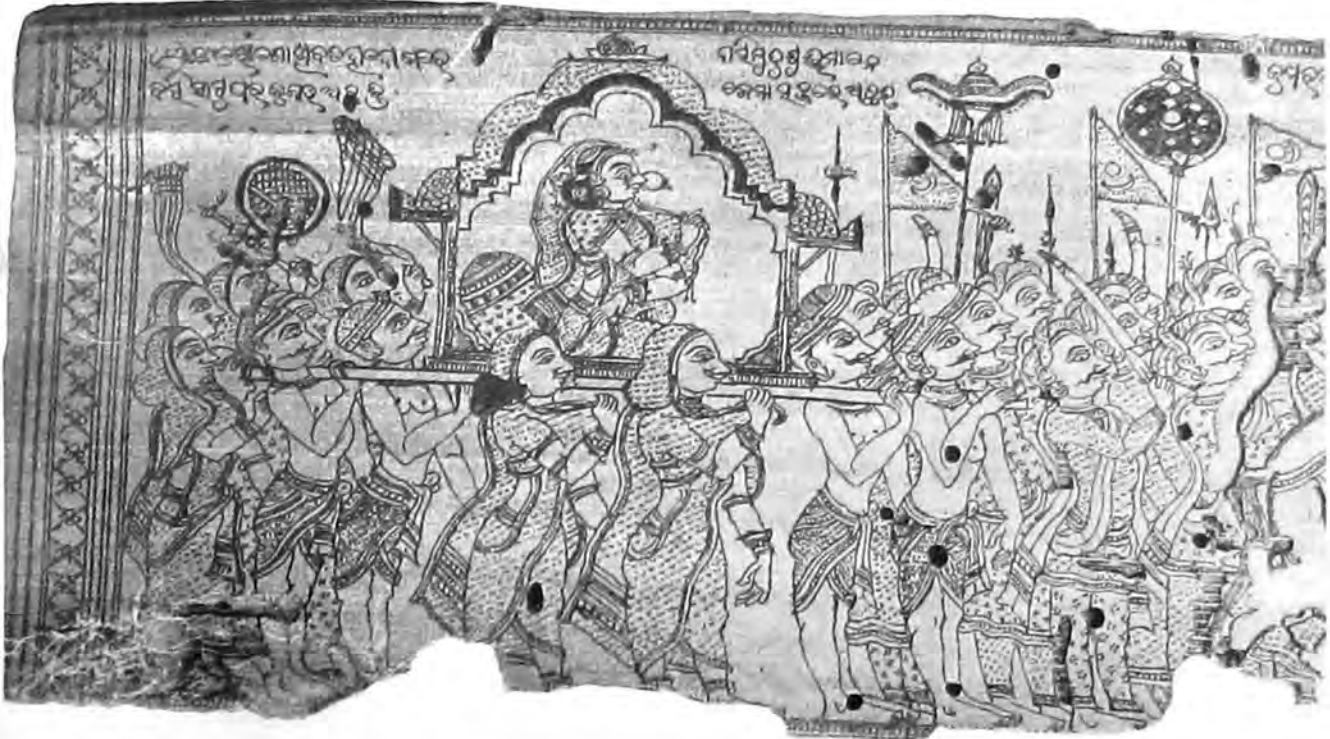


58. *Sobhāvati*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, musicians at *Sobhāvati*'s wedding.

59. *Sobhāvati*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, King Padmadhvaja returns with son and daughter-in-law.







60. *Sobhāvati*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, Sobhāvati carried in a palanquin.

61. *Sobhāvati*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, procession.





62. *Praśna Chūdāmaṇi*, New York Public Library, Wishing Cow.

63. *Praśna Chūdāmaṇi*, New York Public Library, Nārada.



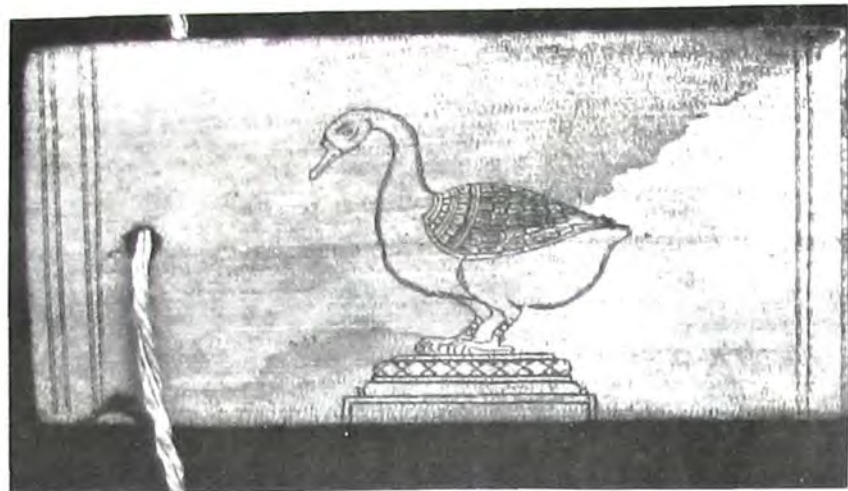




65. *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi*, New York Public Library, Kirāta.

66. *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi*, New York Public Library, Warrior.





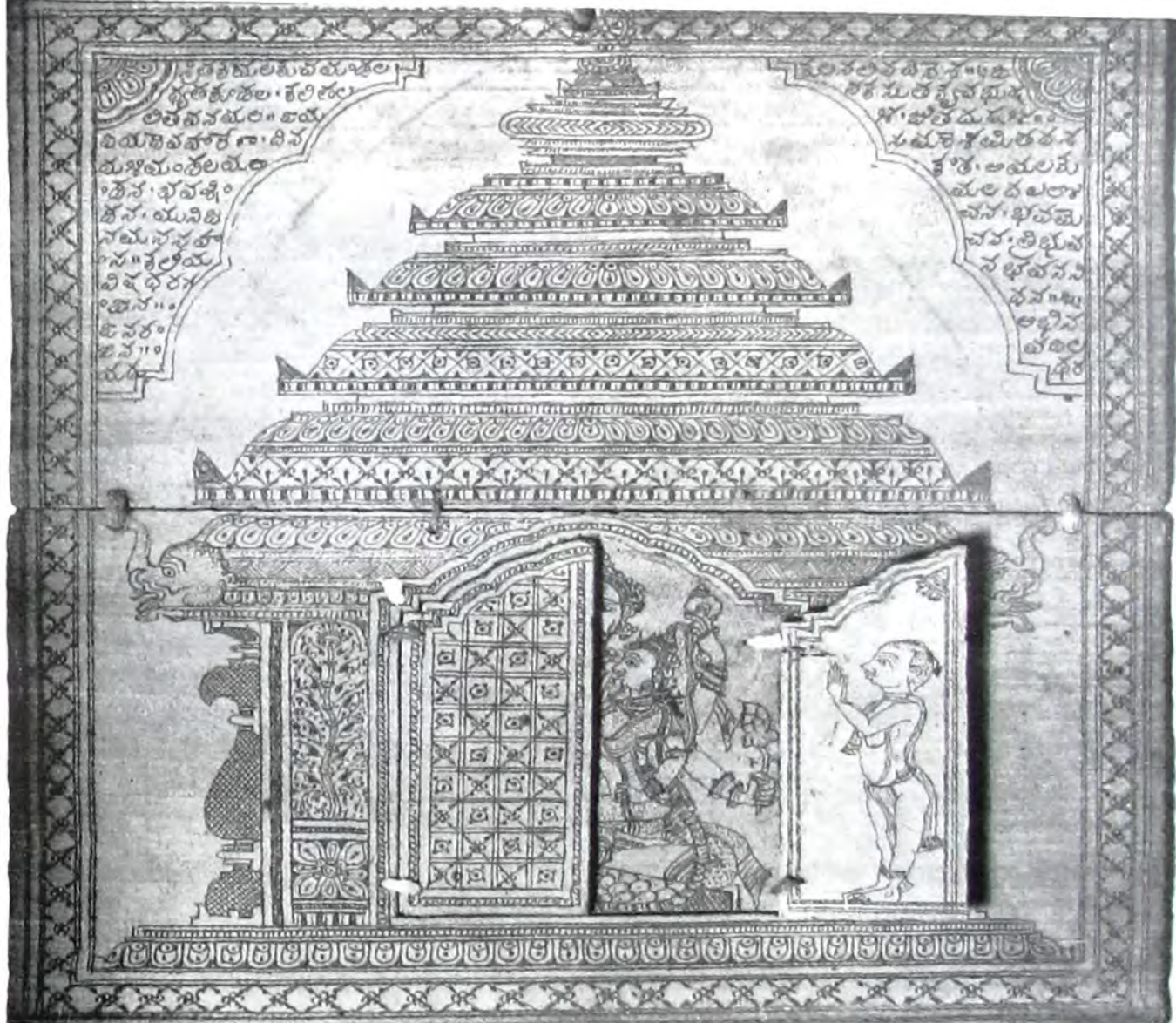
64. *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi*, New York Public Library, Hamsa.



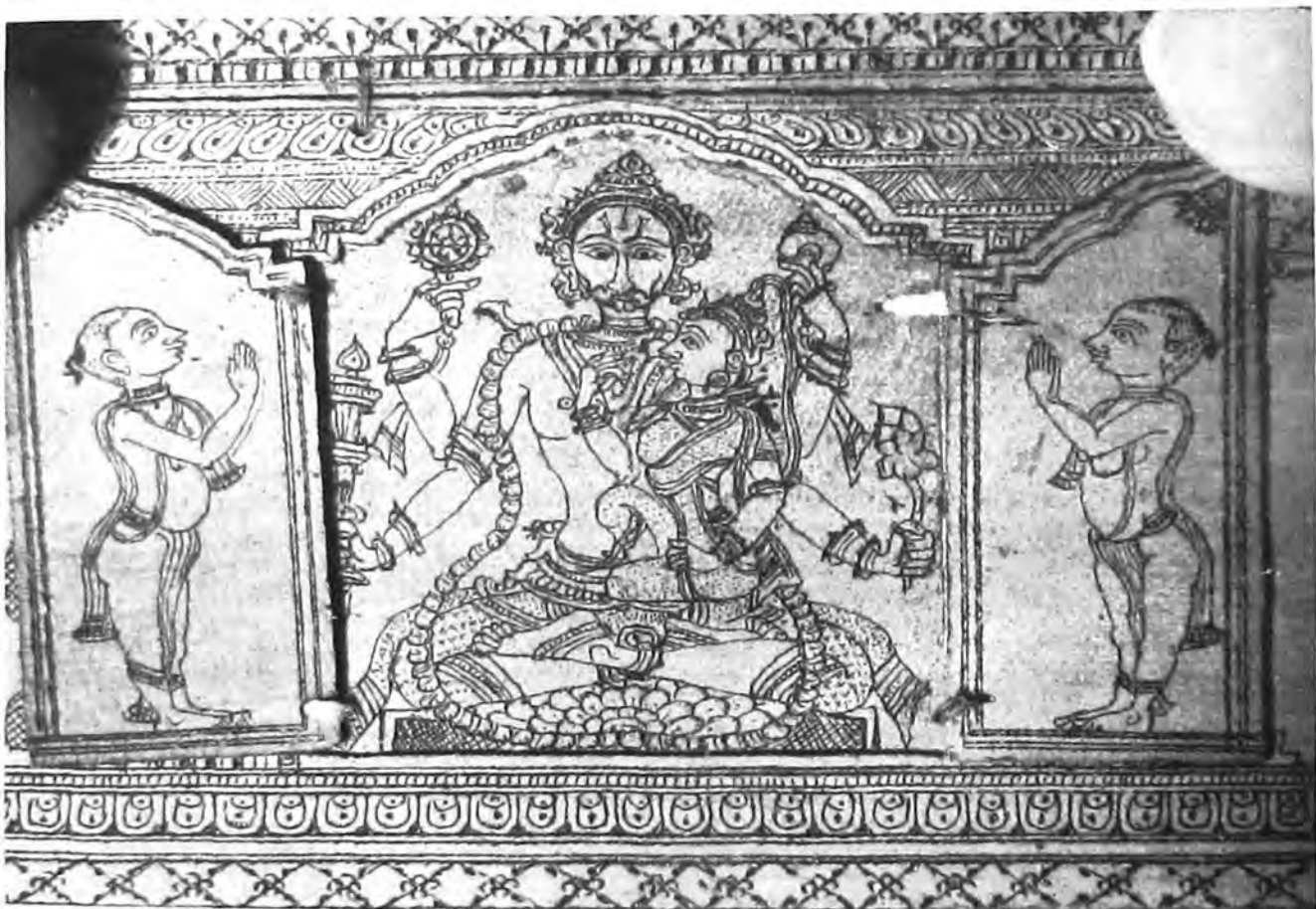
67. *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi*, New York Public Library, Tiger.



68. *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi*, New York Public Library, Deer.

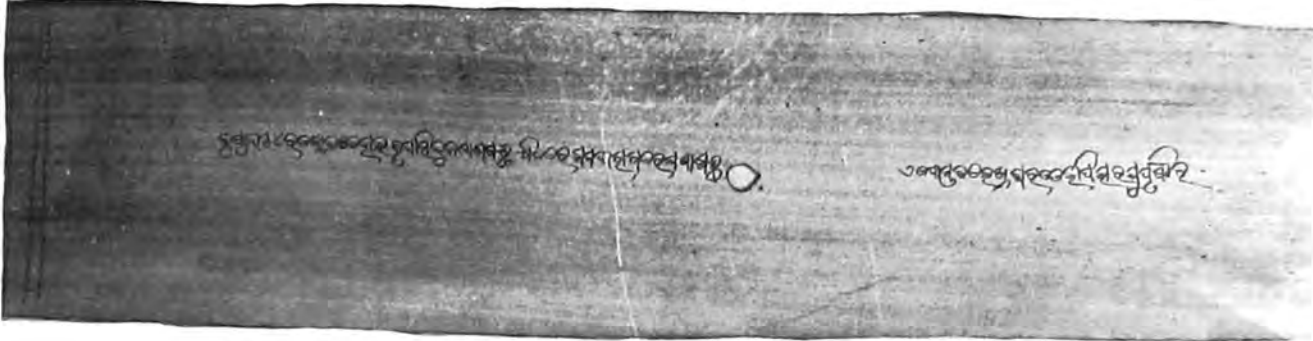






70. *Gita Govinda* shrine, National Museum, New Delhi, detail of 69.





71. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśa*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, colophon.



72. *Śobhāvatī*, Aurobindo Sangrahalaya, Nuagaon, colophon.

Ext.  
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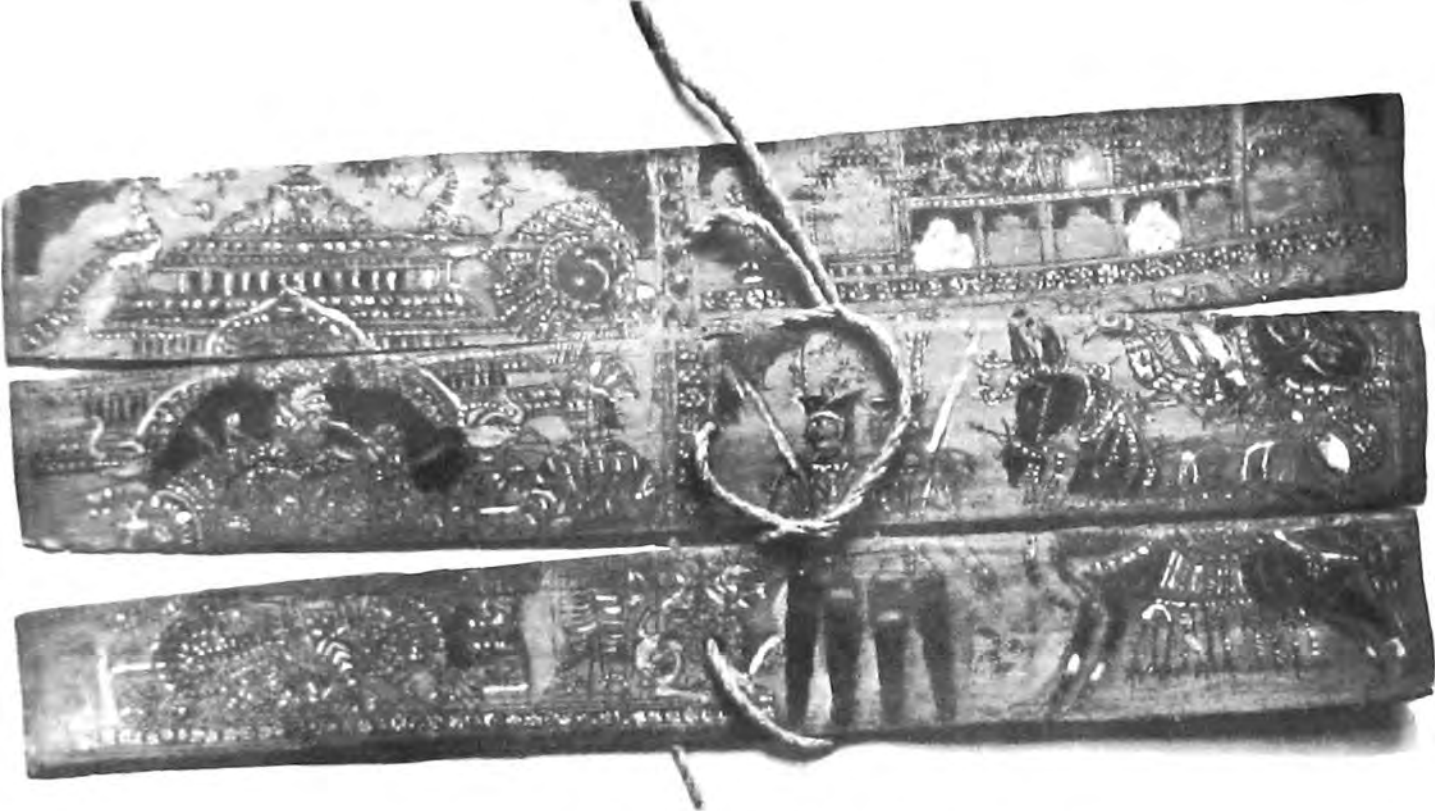
ॐ नमो भगवते वासुदेवाय ॥ १ ॥  
सर्वत्राय नमः सर्वत्राय नमः  
सर्वत्राय नमः सर्वत्राय नमः  
सर्वत्राय नमः सर्वत्राय नमः  
सर्वत्राय नमः सर्वत्राय नमः



74. *Gīta Govinda* , p.c. New Delhi; illustrated by Ramakrishna Dasa, f. 1-Nanda, Kṛishṇa, Rādhā.



75. *Gīta Govinda* , National Museum 74.81; illustrated by Ramakrishna Dasa, Rādhā and Kṛishṇa.



76. *Vaidehīśa Viḷāsa*, Jubel Library, Baripada, 1832, King and soldiers.

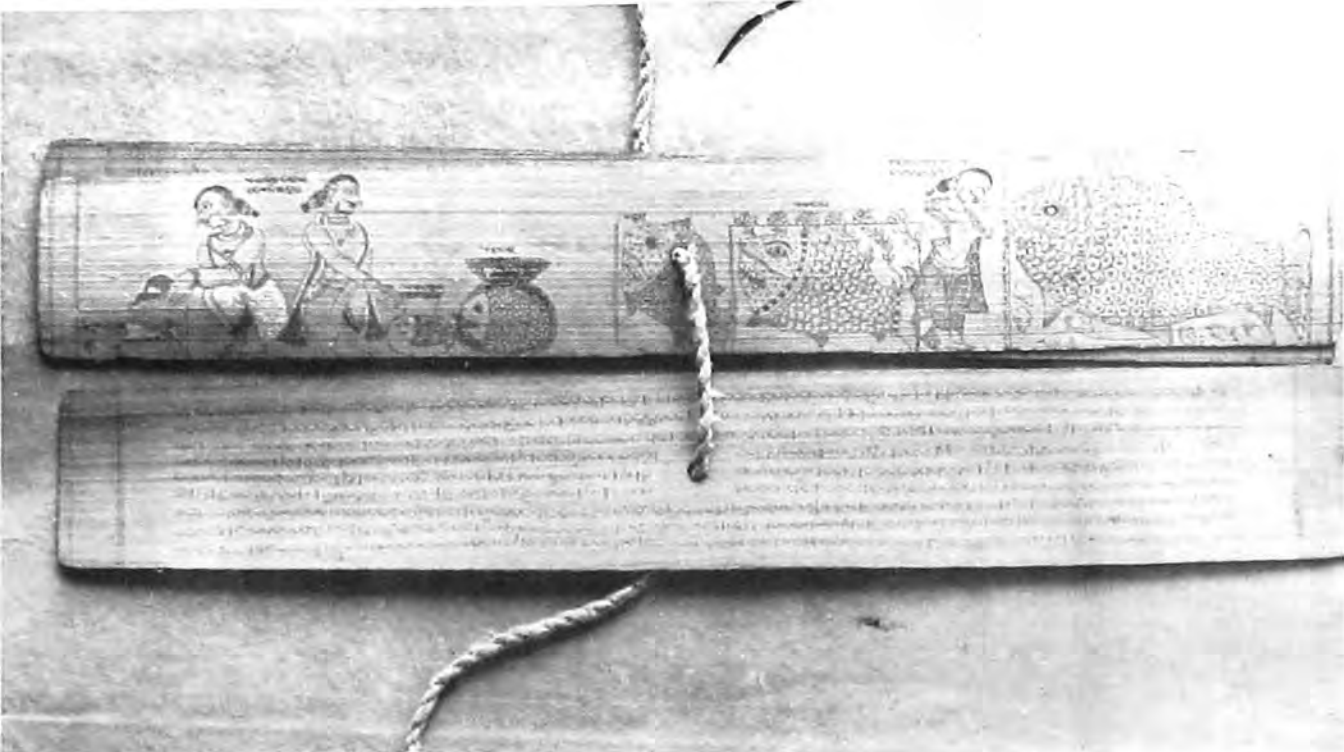




77. *Rādhākṛishṇakeli Kathā*, British Library Or. 11612; illustrated by Dhanañjaya, Gaṇeśa.



80. *Adhyātma Rāmāyaṇa*, New York Public Library, Spencer Collection Indian ms. 14, illustrated by Sarathi Madala Patnaik. Rāma meets Agastya.



78. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, Sambalpur University Department of History;  
illustrated by Brajanātha Baḍajenā, Matsya Avatāra.

79. *Artatrāṇa Chautiśa*, National Museum; illustrated by Sarathi Madala  
Patnaik, Gajendramoksha.



## CHAPTER V

### THE LITERATURE ILLUSTRATED

In general the kinds of texts that were illustrated in Orissa were limited and their selection does not entirely reflect the regard in which they were held in literary or religious terms. A few Sanskrit works written in the Oriya script were commonly illustrated, particularly popular works expressing Kṛishṇa *bhakti*. Similar devotional songs in Oriya also lent themselves easily to pictures. Oriya courtly *kāvya*s were frequently depicted, whereas less poetic (and more verbose) versions of the same epic themes were not. Finally, a variety of more utilitarian works that still appealed to the imagination were illustrated as well. Obviously there was some reluctance to add pictures to a very long work that would become cumbersome as a result, and there must have been a particular appeal in owning some kinds of favorite personal works embellished with pictures.

Among this range of texts, Prusti produced manuscripts of every type. He did execute two examples of some works (the *Gīta Govinda*, the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, and the *Ushābhiṣā*), but he ranged more widely in his choice of subjects than any Oriya palm-leaf illustrator identified so far. For example Ramakrishna Dasa seems to have specialized in the *Gīta Govinda* and *Daśapoī*, an Oriya poem of the same type. Michha Patanjoshi was known exclusively as an illustrator of the *Vaidehiśā Vilāsa*. And Sarathi Madala copied mainly Oriya *kāvya*s and the Oriya translation of the *Adhyātma*

*Rāmāyaṇa*. Prusti's versatility reminds us that what seem in literary terms to be separate genres were on a continuum in terms of the way they were appreciated in rural Orissa. We will now consider the specific texts he illustrated and his particular version of their content.

### A. *Gīta Govinda*

It is of course no surprise that the great Sanskrit poem of the twelfth century poet Jayadeva should be profusely illustrated in Orissa. The profound impact of this piece of literature on the cultural life of the people of India has been much discussed. It influenced Indian religious writing, poetry, music, dance, theatre, and the visual arts as no other book had done. The particular relevance of this poem to Orissa stems from the fact that it was supposedly composed in Puri, where the poet's beloved danced in the Jagannātha Temple. By the fourteenth century, ritual singing of the *Gīta Govinda* had been instituted in the temple, and an inscription of A.D. 1500 stipulates that this alone was to be danced and sung before Lord Jagannātha, which has indeed been practiced ever since.<sup>63</sup> The particular role accorded the poem by the Bengali Vaishṇava mystic, Chaitanya, further increased its veneration throughout eastern India. Commentaries, translations, and works inspired by the *Gīta Govinda* proliferated in Oriya, and all of these have been frequently copied in palm-leaf form.

Yet it was the original Sanskrit *Gīta Govinda* that was most widely sung at a popular level and most frequently illustrated. Often the entire text was illustrated, as in Prusti's early work (Plates 1-3). Here, as remarked in Chapter II, our artist followed a model that went back to Ramakrishna Dasa,

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<sup>63</sup>Barbara Stoler Miller, *Love Song of the Dark Lord*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1977, 6.



who seems to have specialized in this text. For example, five known copies of the *Gīta Govinda* by Dasa all commence with a very similar scene of cow, Nanda, Kṛishṇa, Rādhā, with a cloud above and a tank to the right (Plate 74), which Prusti reproduced (Plate 1). An illustration of the first verse of the poem is not included in all Orissan versions, and when this is, it may include other figures.<sup>64</sup> In general Prusti's work follows Dasa's picture by picture.

The second type of illustration of the *Gīta Govinda* focuses upon one excerpt and takes the form of a few palm leaves stitched together. The commonest subject for this type is the first song of the entire poem, describing the Ten Avatāras, but other parts were also selected.<sup>65</sup> Prusti's two shrines both bear the second song of the first *sarga* :

Pressed to her round lotus-breast, blessed with rings  
in your ears,  
Laden with lovely garlands, win, oh Winning God  
(Jayadeva), Hari.

Caught in the circle of each jewel-day, yet cutting  
through existence,  
A wild goose in the mind-lake (Mānasa) of sages, win,  
oh Winning God, Hari.

You choked the poison snake Kāliya and charmed  
all the folk,

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<sup>64</sup>Kapila Vatsyayan, "The Illustrated Manuscripts of the Gita-Govinda from Orissa," *Madhu*, 275-86. Orissa State Museum Ms. L 46 (Vatsyayan p. 280) and Ext 35 (Vatsyayan 284) lack this scene. In Ms. Ext 44 (Vatsyayan 278) this first leaf includes Sarasvatī. While many references in Vatsyayan's article appear to have been jumbled by the printer, the list of illustrations in each manuscript is extremely useful in making comparisons.

<sup>65</sup>E.g. Das, *Chitra-pothi*, 41-2, 56, 67.

You are the daylight that makes the lotus of the  
Yādavas bloom; win, oh Winning God, Hari.

As Rāma you were adorned by Sītā; you conquered  
the demon Dūshāṇa.  
You killed the ten-headed Rāvana; win, oh Winning  
God, Hari.

Your eyes are the size of pure lotus petals;  
you free us from existence,  
While preserving the existence of the three worlds;  
win, oh Winning God, Hari.

Handsome as a dark blue rain-cloud, you held  
Mount Mandara, churning the ocean.  
As the chakora bird looks to the moon, you look to  
Śrī's moon-face. Win, oh Winning God, Hari.

The poet Jayadeva delights in singing  
This pure and passionate song.  
Win, oh Winning God, Hari.<sup>66</sup>

The fact that only the actual song is present, and not the less accessible *kāvya* verses that frame it suggests the status of these small shrines. They are the physical equivalent of this melodic side of Jayadeva's masterpiece, which the devotee of Kṛishṇa might carry about in his heart. It is interesting that while various exploits are mentioned in this song, Prusti chooses to illustrate it with an iconic image of the Lord himself. The fact that this depicts both Viṣṇu and Kṛishṇa is part of Jayadeva's exaltation of the Cowherd God. In short, Prusti, often playful and humorous, here stresses the solemn side of this deeply revered text.

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<sup>66</sup>These correspond to verses 17 to 24 in Barbara Stoler Miller's edition, except that 20 is omitted here, and 21 and 22 are reversed (*Love Song of the Dark Lord*, 131-2). Our translation is at times not literal, in the interest of conveying some sense of the rich use of alliteration, rhyme, and word-play.

No joined palm-leaves by other artists of this particular aspect of the *Gīta Govinda* are known, yet one hesitates to ascribe its invention to Raghunath Prusti; he may have followed a lost model. Clearly the delicacy and dignity of these miniature shrines were attractive both to him and to several patrons in the region of Mundamarai. Perhaps someone saw the first and coveted a similar work for himself. There is particular interest in the fact that the first was written in the Telugu script, following the same version of the text as does the Oriya. It is entirely credible that Prusti, the product of a bilingual region, might have known both languages, although his general cultural roots lay more to the north.

### B. *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*

There may have been several authors named Dīnakṛishṇa Dāsa. One lived in Puri in the eighteenth century and is said to have contracted leprosy, hence the frequent references to his miseries in his poetry.<sup>67</sup> Dīnakṛishṇa is reputed to have refused to credit his own work to the ruler of Khurda, unlike Brajanātha Baḍajenā, who prostituted himself in order to survive. The *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* or "Ode to the Deliverer of the Oppressed" is also known as the *Kṛipāsindhu Jaṇāṇa* or "Entreaty to the Ocean of Mercy," for Lord Jagannātha is invoked by this epithet in the first verse. The poet is supposed to have recited this poignant work every day in the Puri Temple. It is comparable to the *Gīta Govinda* both in its intense expression of devotion and in its appeal as a song, although this is simpler and not romantic. Prusti's

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<sup>67</sup>B. C. Mazumdar, *Typical Selections from Oriya Literature*. Calcutta: University of Calcutta, 1923, vol. II, xii-xiv. Mayadhar Mansinha, *History of Oriya Literature* 45-6, 125-6.

second manuscript in fact includes both Sanskrit and Oriya versions of each verse, although the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* is usually discussed of as an Oriya composition. As a *chautiśā*, it follows a conventional form of thirty four stanzas, the lines of each of which begin with one letter of the alphabet, from Ka to Ksha. This tour de force must both have served as a creative challenge to the poet and as a mnemonic device for the singer, and it remains popular in rural Orissa.

Three portions of this poem that are illustrated here from both of Prusti's manuscripts exemplify its verses:

- 1) Seized by a crocodile in the water, the elephant king  
called to the Source of Protection.  
Seeing his terror, oh Śrīranga, at once you sent your discus.  
Oh Great Lord.

You took the life of the crocodile;  
you delivered the elephant from danger.  
Still, borne by Garuḍa, you remain pitiless to my pleas  
of karma. Oh Great Lord.  
(couplets 5-6; Pls. 9, 22)

- 2) Deep in the forest, the pregnant doe called out, and you,  
hearing its call, at once  
Delivered her from danger. So Śrīpati, why are you  
heartless to this man? Oh Great Lord.  
(couplet 18, Pls. 8, 20)

- 3) Even if you have cast me off, I long for none but you,  
As the *chakora* bird longs for the moon, the *chātaka* bird  
for the cloud, the fish for water. Oh Great Lord.  
(couplet 49, Pls. 7, 19)

With the actual text in mind, we find Prusti's development in the two sets of pictures striking if also complex. His illustrations of the first two incidents are both elaborated. In the case of the Gajendramoksha, the initial



version seems to focus on couplet 5, while the second includes Vishṇu on Garuḍa, mentioned in the next couplet and a standard part of this event in other Indian images. Sarathi Madala, a contemporary of Prusti working only some twenty kilometers away, employed the same basic iconographic formula (Plate 79), but the two pictures seem to have no direct relationship with each other. Patnaik interpreted the poem's villain, called a *graha*, as a fantastic serpent (in which he had precedents in earlier sculpture), whereas Prusti took this to be a large version of the familiar *magara*. Patnaik surrounded the villain and its victim with a darkened area, a device to highlight the action, although the artist was not quite able to carry this off in terms either of design or of representation. As usual with this illustrator, one admires his verve but must admit he dashed off his work carelessly.

In the case of the pregnant doe, Prusti added elements in his second version that are specifically not mentioned in the poem, nor are we aware of other images from which the fierce dog, fire, and net are included. It seems that the artist has here embroidered the terse description of the verse from his own imagination.

Yet in the third case, whatever the origin of the initial composition, Prusti seems to have recognized it as a good thing, and his changes in the second are minor matters of refinement. Whereas in the other verses he could depict only examples of the Lord's mercy, not of Dīnakṛishṇa's bitter lament, here we have an image that captures the poet's yearning in the metaphor of the three creatures. And Prusti extended the visual equivalence with the evocative and unusual emptiness of Plate 19. Thus we see that the relationship between the poem and his pictures is contrapuntal, for he used and elaborated upon the verses in various ways.

### C. *Kuṇḍalī Janāṇa*

Kavisūrya Baḷadeva Ratha belonged to the generation after Dīnakṛishṇa Dāsa, having lived from 1789 until 1845.<sup>68</sup> He was born in Badakhemundi, now renamed in his honour Kavisuryanagar. His major patron was the Rājā of Athgarh, although in his old age he moved to Jalantara, both small states in the area. He was known for his social graces, his singing, and his wit.

He was an extraordinary linguist--a finished scholar in Sanskrit and master of at least five other Indian languages. With these rare qualities he was not only in great demand at the many feudal courts of southern Orissa as a court poet, but was also engaged by British collectors as Dewan of large estates and as trusted guardian tutor of minor chiefs. With large land-grants from among admiring royal patrons and incomes from the various posts of trust he held, the poet lived a prosperous, successful, and famous life, unlike most others of his tribe in Orissa.<sup>69</sup>

Kavisūrya's many songs remain popular in Orissa today. The love of Rādhā and Kṛishṇa is a frequent subject, again comparable to the *Gīta Govinda* but without its explicitly erotic dimension.

The *Kuṇḍalī Janāṇa* or "Prayer to the Serpent" is a characteristic short, intense work, full of word-play, yet melodic and more accessible than true *kāvya*. In it Kṛishṇa is addressed as a snake or *kuṇḍalī*, a term with tantric overtones of female energy. One example is the verse illustrated in Plate 32:

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<sup>68</sup>This is the usually accepted date of his death, although B. C. Mazumdar suggested he died only by 1868 (*Typical Selections from Oriya Literature*, II, xxxii).

<sup>69</sup>Mansinha, *History of Oriya Literature*, 135.

You are attached to Bibara (Garuḍa)  
 as the snake is to its *bibara* (hole).  
 Both you and the snake are manifest  
 in a *paṭa-paṭaḷa* (picture, skin).

Here, as in the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, Prusti departs from the more standard depictions of religious subjects found elsewhere in the manuscript, or rather the metaphor in the verse inspires him to create a fresh and poignant image. On the right is a traditional version of Viṣṇu on Garuḍa, worked out with elegant precision. On the left is the serpent on an ant-hill pitted with holes, so that the puns of the verse are spelled out. The contrast between the elaborate detail of the divinity and the simplicity of the natural scene makes the humorous analogy all the more telling. Unfortunately we know of no other illustrated versions of this work which might clarify Prusti's particular treatment of such a subject.

#### D. *Ushābhiḷāsha*

This work is the earliest text illustrated by Prusti. Its author, Śiśuśankara Dāsa wrote around A.D.1600, in the shadow of the great peasant poet of Orissa, Śārālā Dāsa. Śiśuśankara's major work is a courtly version of one episode that occurs in Śārālā Dāsa's earthy and direct *Mahābhārata*.<sup>70</sup> *Ushābhiḷāsha* means "Desire of Ushā," the daughter of the demon-king Bāṇa, who in a dream falls in love with an unknown man. Her confidante Chitralkhā draws pictures of all kinds of men and gods and finally identifies him as Aniruddha, grandson of Kṛiṣṇa. Then Chitralkhā kidnaps him for Ushā, who must hide him because her father is a staunch devotee of Śiva and

<sup>70</sup>Mansinha, *History of Oriya Literature*, 84-5. The story of Ushā of course occurs in the Sanskrit *Mahābhārata* as well, but Śiśuśankara's version follows Śārālā Dāsa's departures from that in plot. There are also later Oriya versions of this story.

would not approve of a Vaishṇava match. The lovers live in secret bliss until Bāṇa discovers them, which leads to a major battle between the forces of Śiva and those of Kṛishṇa. The latter wins, and Ushā and Aniruddha are able to live together forever.

While this poem may be classified as *kāvya* and is certainly more ornate than Śārāḷa Dāsa's work, in comparison with the poems so far discussed and Upendra Bhaṅja's to follow this is relatively straightforward. As an example consider the passage illustrated in Plates 14 and 89:

At the forest lake, far from the fort,  
Umā and Śiva played water sport.

Their handmaids held parasol-bowers  
And some also bore fans made of flowers.

Afloat in the boat, one wanton maid  
Sprayed scented water, while others played.

Some swam, plucked lotuses, pelted the shore,  
Sending out ripples and begging for more.

The daughter of Himavan, drunk in her fashion,  
Gazed at Śambhu with rosy passion.

Then Kāma, God of Love, with guile  
Turned and looked with a meaning smile.

While the sun's heat had been cooled by the water,  
Kāma's flame grew hotter and hotter.<sup>71</sup>

This serves to introduce Kāma, who turns his attention to the heroine Ushā. Thus it is a kind of digression to which Prusti devotes a full page, and this in a

<sup>71</sup> Śīśuśankara Dāsa, *Ushābhīlāsha*. Cuttack: Pustaka Prakasha, 1971, Chhanda 4, v. 19-24, pp. 100-101. Our translation attempts to capture the general effect of the rhymed couplets.



manuscript less profusely illustrated than his later works. He depicts all of the attendants' games and adds appropriate details not mentioned in the text, such as Nandi accompanying his master. The mannered version of this same subject in Plate 89 makes the attendants more voluptuous and energetic yet does not create the same sense of gentle sport. In the case of the *Ushābhilāsha*, however, because both of Prusti's manuscripts are early works made when he was guided by other scribes and illustrators, his treatment of the subject matter is less striking than with some other texts.

### E. *Lāvanyavatī*

This and the next work are romances written by Orissa's renowned courtly poet, Upendra Bhañja. He lived in the first half of the eighteenth century, the grandson the Rājā of Ghumsar, Dhanañjaya Bhañja (1640-1701), who was also an author.<sup>72</sup> Although Upendra's father was expelled from the throne, the son had the honorary title of Yuvarāj and was immersed in the Ghumsar court throughout his life. While he dealt with some religious themes such as the story of Rāma, he was relatively secular in his poetry, whose strong erotic content has at times been criticized by Oriyas. He carried to an extreme the euphuistic tradition of *kāvya*, employing puns, palindromes, and complex verse forms that would make Kālidāsa look simple by comparison. A nineteenth century scholar wrote, "To summarize, Upendra Bhañja is in Oriya language the most voluminous author, the earliest and most prominent fictional poet, the most obscene, the most

<sup>72</sup>Mazumdar, *Typical Selections from Oriya Literature*, II, xvi-xxv (a very hostile account). Mansinha, *History of Oriya Literature*, 114-124.

unintelligible, and on the whole the best writer of rhetorical excellences."<sup>73</sup> And yet it would be unfair to imply that his appeal was only to the rarefied world of the intelligentsia. For two centuries, the popular entertainment known as *Pālā* has used his word-play and romantic episodes to fascinate village audiences.

The *Lāvaṇyavatī* is typical for its genre. As a result of a misdemeanour, a couple in heaven are born on earth, the woman as *Lāvaṇyavatī*, princess of Simhala, the man as *Chandrabhānu*, prince of Karnataka. The king of Simhala sends his daughter's picture to different rulers in order to find a husband for her. *Chandrabhānu* sees the picture, is smitten with her beauty, and prays to *Hara-Pārvatī*. The gods bring *Chandrabhānu* by magic to *Lāvaṇyavatī*'s room, where he spends the night with her, leaving the next morning. The lovers write letters to each other and eventually get married. Their happiness has a short break when *Chandrabhānu* goes to war, but he returns after a year and is crowned King of Karnataka, and everything ends happily. Some idea of the poetic style is conveyed by the lines depicted in the central leaf in Colour Plate H, part of a subplot in which a magician performs the *Rāmāyaṇa* before *Lāvaṇyavatī* in order to arouse her love:

The monkey king (*śākhāmṛigarājā*) was strong as a lion (*mṛigarājā*).  
*Rāma* made fast work of the monkey (*śarabha*) with an arrow (*śara*).  
 Having set up his camp on Mount *Mālyavanta*,  
*Raghuvīra* lived without *Sītā* in the rainy season.  
 He gave the cock (*kukkuṭa*) a crown (*mukuta*) on the crest (*kūṭa*) of  
 the hill,  
 And getting (*labhi*) news of his wife (*vallabhī*), he sent a messenger.

<sup>73</sup>M.M. Chakravarty, "Language and Literature of Orissa," *Journal of the Asiatic Society of Bengal*, 1898, 367.

The famous Naḷa laid (*kale*) a bridge (*śiḷe*) accross the sea (*jaḷe*).<sup>74</sup>

While this part of the story is told in capsule form, rich with allusion and poetic devices, the picture expands this in narrative terms, as do many other illustrated palm-leaf *Lāvanyaavatī*s, which generally illustrate the Rāmāyaṇa sequence profusely. Let us compare the leaf in Colour Plate H with three other palm-leaf versions of the same subject. At the left is the death of Vali. Prusti frames this episode with Rāma and Hanumāna, composes the fighting monkey brothers symmetrically, and inserts the actual collapse of Vali in the middle, out of sequence. Michha Patajoshi's version of 1914 seems more amateurish in the design of individual parts, as well more straightforward in narrative terms, for this is followed by the breaking of the news to Vali's wife Tārā and his death in systematic order from left to right (Plate 84). It is possible that Prusti's sequence was suggested by the poem's initial reference to Vali's leonine strength, but at any rate, it is a departure from the order one might expect and shows that he felt free to re-organize the linear plot.

His second major unit on the same leaf is Mt. Mālyavanta, where Rāma crowns a cock that brings him news of Sītā and dispatches Hanumāna to search for her. All of this is welded into a single scene that places the hill in the center of the entire leaf. The National Museum *Lāvanyaavatī* illustrated in Plate 82 spreads the same episodes over an entire folio, clarifying the events by depicting each phrase in a separate frame, like a comic strip. The drawing of individual figures is likewise clearer and less rich than Prusti's.

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<sup>74</sup>Ch. 15, verses 26-27. Upendra Bhañja, *Lāvanyaavatī*. Cuttack: Orissa Jagannatha Company, 1977, 115-6.

Finally at the far right of Prusti's leaf we see the building of the bridge to Lanka, with Naḷa supervising from the terra firma of Mt. Mālyavanta, while three monkeys trip across the seemingly completed causeway, bringing boulders from Lanka. The apparent illogic of this scene is justified by the masterful composition of the entire leaf, in which this portion balances the contest between Vali and Sugriva to the left. The equally accomplished artist of the dispersed *Lāvanyaavatī* pits this episode against Rāvana's palace (Plate 85). His version of the bridge construction is more credible than Prusti's, proceeding to the right with a sense of the weight of the boulders and of their placement in the middle of the ocean. Yet Prusti conveys the fabulous nature of the great epic, with monkeys flitting like birds.

Moreover in this book more than in any other, Prusti adds graphic, localized details to the more abstract and courtly poem. For instance, Plate 50 details all sorts of artisans and workers, identified in the captions that the artist himself composed, discussed below in detail in Chapter VI. The poem itself mentions only some of these as part of the preparations made for Chandrabhānu's journey to Ramesvara on the way to Simhala, and the anonymous artist of another *Lāvanyaavatī* shows only a pair of bullock carts (Plate 81). Thus we see Prusti late in his career embroidering the text and in the process weaving his own story.

#### F. *Śobhāvatī*

This second romance by Upendra Bhañja must for now remain obscure as a text. On the one hand, this manuscript itself is too fragmentary for us to follow the story. On the other hand, no printed edition of the work exists. In fact even the authorship of this *kāvya* is unclear. It has been asserted that Purushottamasimha Mānadhātā, Rājā



of Nayagarh in Puri District, wrote a poem called *Śobhāvati* in ten cantos during the reign of Gajapati Divyasimha Deva of Puri/Khurda (1688-1716).<sup>75</sup> At the same time, another poem of the same name has been ascribed to Upendra Bhañja.<sup>76</sup> The present manuscript seems to resolve this problem. The first page of the Nuagaon manuscript refers to this as the work of Upendra Bhañja, while its fragmentary colophon quoted in Chapter 3 says "in the name of Mānadhātā of Nuāgaḍa. . . ." It would seem that Upendra penned the work and put the name of his patron on it, a practice of which there are other cases in Orissa. As for the plot, we can infer that the heroine is Śobhāvati, that the Prince of Kashmir is a major character, and that it follows the pattern of many romances. In his illustrations, Prusti is less reticent in depicting erotic scenes than in any of his other works. A complete manuscript of this work should be properly studied.

### G. *Sangīta Dāmodara*

Prusti's Rāgamālā forms a small section of a large Sanskrit text on music by Śubhankara, probably composed in Bengal around A.D. 1500.<sup>77</sup> Two other Orissan palm-leaf Rāgamālās follow the same text as Prusti's (Pls.

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<sup>75</sup>Orissa District Gazetteers: Puri, ed. Nilamani Senapati and Durga Charan Kuanr. Cuttack: Government of Orissa, 1977, 528.

<sup>76</sup>Praharaj, *Pūrṇachandra Oḍiā Bhāṣhākoshā*, Vol. VI, 7797, specifically identifies two different works by these authors under the entry Śobhāvati.

<sup>77</sup>Śubhankara, *Sangīta Dāmodarah*, ed. Gaurinath Sastri and Govindagopal Mukhopadhyaya. *Calcutta Sanskrit College Research Series* no. XI (Calcutta, 1960).

90 to 92).<sup>78</sup> In all three manuscripts, Śubhankara's basic list of thirty-six *rāgas* is augmented by ten more ascribed to an otherwise unknown author, the sage Kaḷāṅkura. The Sanskrit is reproduced in Oriya script, each verse followed by an Oriya translation which is more or less identical in all three manuscripts. The *Sangīta Dāmodara* is cited in some Orissan manuscripts of the *Gīta Govinda* in order to indicate which *rāga* was to be used in singing its verses. From this and the fact that this is the only Rāgamālā illustrated in Orissan manuscripts, we may infer that this was a particularly popular work, providing a catchy melodic version that could easily be remembered.<sup>79</sup>

The verses of the *Sangīta Dāmodara*, like many Rāgamālās, provide allusive descriptions of the generally romantic situation associated with each musical mode, although in poetic terms they are far simpler and more formulaic than the religious and courtly literature so far discussed. Most in this list occur in musical literature elsewhere in India, although six

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<sup>78</sup>The first is National Museum, New Delhi Ms. 72.111. This is mentioned and one page reproduced in Das, *Chitra-poṭhi*, 86-88. We would estimate its date to be nineteenth century, although there is no solid evidence. The second example is in the New York Public Library, Spencer Collection, Indian Ms. 9. This unpublished work may be late nineteenth or twentieth century. All three follow the basic sequence of the Bhubaneswar set (K.C. Patnaik, *Rāga-citra*), although a few leaves are missing in the Delhi and New York manuscripts, a few pairs of *rāgas* are reversed, and the spelling of a few names differs. The iconography of all three is also fundamentally similar, although as in the examples illustrated here, the visual differences are sufficient to militate against one having been directly based upon another (as we argued was the case with Prusti's first *Gīta Govinda* and same work of Ramakrishna Dasa).

<sup>79</sup>For a painted Rāgamālā on cloth, without text but definitely not corresponding to the *Sangīta Dāmodara*, see Joanna Williams, "A Painted Rāgamālā from Orissa," *Lalit Kalā* 23 (1988).



82. *Lāvanyavatī*, National Museum 72.165, I, Rāma rewards cock, hears news of Sītā, dispatches Hanumāna.



84. *Vaidehīśa Viḷāsa*, p. c., New Delhi; illustrated by Michha Patajoshi, 1914  
Rāma shoots Vali.



85. *Lāvanyavatī* (dispersed), National Museum, building the bridge to Lanka.



81. *Lāvaṇyavatī*, National Museum 72.165, I, preparations for Chandrabhānu's journey to Rameshvaram.



83. *Vaidehīśa Viḷāsa*, Asutosh Museum, Calcutta; illustrated by Michha Patajoshi, 1914, Daśaratha and musicians.





87. *Brahma Rāmāyaṇa*, Daśāvatāra Maṭha, Jajpur; Sunrise, Brahmins

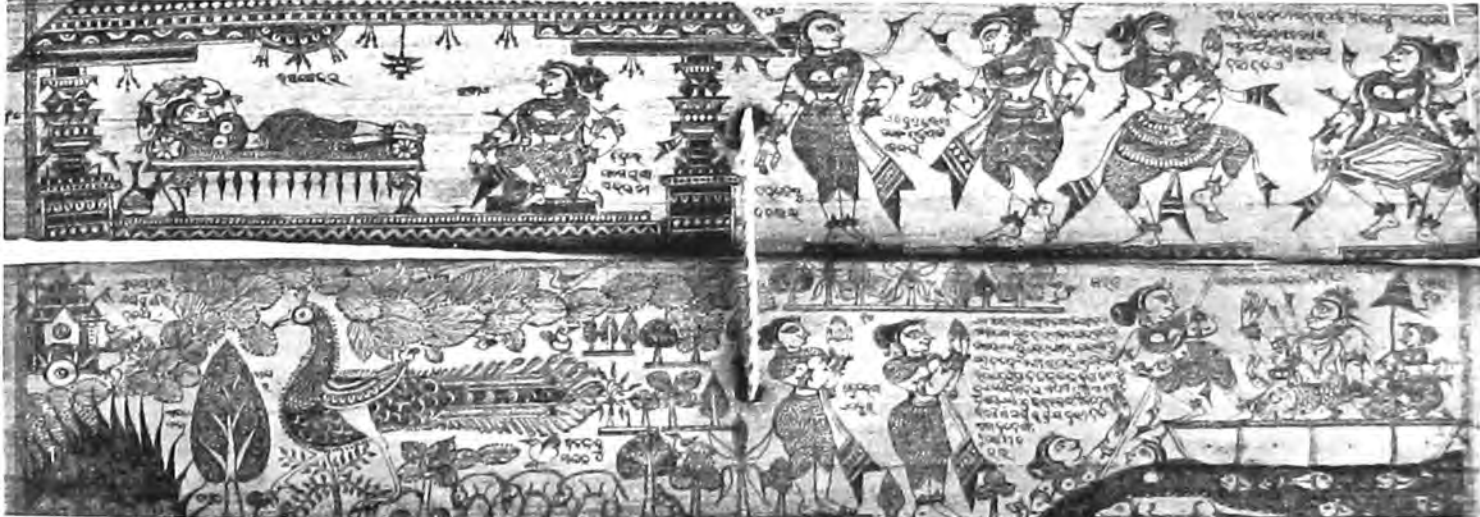




86. *Bhāgavata Purāṇa*, British Library Or. 11689, Kṛishṇa dancing with the Gopīs.

88. *Ushābhīlāsha*, Orissa State Museum OL 23. f. 1, Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī, Mahishāsuramardini.





89. *Ushābhīlāsha*, Orissa State Museum OL 23. Ushā and attendants; Śiva and Parvatī desport in a boat.

92. *Sangīta Dāmodara*, New York Public Library, Spencer Collection, Indian ms. 9. Rāga Tankara.







90. *Sangīta Dāmodara*, National Museum 72.111. Rāga Himakirī.

91. *Sangīta Dāmodara*, National Museum 72.111. Rāga Lalita.







ଶ୍ରୀଗଣେଶ୍ଵରାୟ ନମଃ





94. Fortune-teller with parrot, Cuttack. (Photo by Dipak Samantarai)

apparently do not.<sup>80</sup> Among the *rāgas* that are familiar elsewhere, some are interpreted in an unusual way in the Orissan manuscripts.<sup>81</sup> Several of these exceptional verses, which are illustrated in Colour Plate E, may be quoted:

Himakirī should be fair skinned  
With a *kankeli* sprig in her hand.  
Gold bangles jangling, wildly excited,  
She is kissed by her lover. (Verse 33)

Young Lalita, very fair skinned,  
Wearing a fresh *saptacchada* garland,  
Comes out of the house in the morn,  
Smartly dressed yet dreamy eyed. (Verse 34)

Tankāra Rāga is known to be dark  
And beautiful in every limb.  
Holding a wonderful gem in his hand  
He gives his wealth to those who beg. (Verse 38)

A comparison between Prusti's illustration of Himakirī and the anonymous National Museum set demonstrates both the strengths and weaknesses of our artist. His architecture is more credible, and the figures exist in three-dimensional space. At the same time this is one of his most comic frontal faces, suggesting distress or surprise on the part of the woman. The version in Plate 90, on the other hand, uses firmly interwoven flat planes to create a

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<sup>80</sup>These are Koḍaba, Rāḍī, Rājñī, Tankuṇā, Himakirī, and Kallāsikā. Cf. Klaus Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*. Basel: Ravi Kumar, 1973.

<sup>81</sup>In addition to Tankāra and Lalita, discussed below, Gauri (Gauḍī), which occurs both in Śubhankara's and Kaḷānkura's lists, differs (Pl. 39). In Rajasthan this is depicted as a woman out of doors, never involving Kāma. Kāma enjoyed a long cult in Orissa and is frequently included in manuscripts of diverse subjects. Also Drābiḍī, depicted in Western India as a woman with vina (Ebeling, *Ragamala Painting*, Color Pl. 48), but the scene of a couple playing parchisi that we find in Orissa is reserved, at least in the Punjab Hills, for Chada Rāga.



tender vision of the two lovers as one, like Picasso's ingenious double images.

The depiction of Lalita is interesting because all Oriya versions show a woman walking away, whereas in Rajasthan and elsewhere, this common *rāga* is represented by a man leaving a lady, who lies in pique on her bed. In Śubhankara's Sanskrit, the youth (*yuva*) is clearly masculine, but in Oriya the gender is not clear. Evidently the illustrators depended upon the Oriya translation, as one might have expected. In the *Sangīta Dāmodara* it is not specified whether the protagonist is leaving the beloved or only the house. Characteristically, Prusti opts for the evocative empty chamber, whereas both other versions include the man, looking equally dreamy-eyed. And again there is considerable difference between his crisp, energetic depiction and the more frozen patterns of the New Delhi manuscript in Plate 91, where the architecture above the woman is in fact illegible as a three-dimensional form.

In Rajasthani painting, Tank[ār]a is depicted by a woman alone on her bed, the name apparently referring to her golden complexion.<sup>82</sup> Here the verse by Kaḷāṅkura as well as the Orissan illustrators envision the *rāga* as a man giving alms, probably because *ṭankā* is the common word for money in Oriya and Bengali. The third copy of the *Sangīta Dāmodara* is very similar to Prusti's in composition, but entirely different in effect. Thus the anonymous artist of Plate 92 does not differentiate the Brahmin recipient from the donor. All types of figures throughout this manuscript have the

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<sup>82</sup>Ebeling, *Ragamāla Painting*, 82, 130, 142, 147, fig. 216. Ebeling's Colour Plate 43, and figs. 23 and 190 show the gift of money to musicians, illustrating Rāga Pañcam. And fig. 303 shows a similar Pahari example identified as Rāga Mangal.



same face, long in the chin and with sharply pointed nose. The lack of foreshortening in the torsos (hence the placement of the Brahmin's navel to the side) and the unbroken, large pattern of drapery flatten the figures, even though they are more adeptly and carefully drawn than, for example, the work of the prolific Sarathi Madala (Plates 79, 80). In short, Prusti's illustrations of the *rāgas* follow definite regional patterns of iconography, without being directly dependent upon any particular work known at the moment.

### H. *Praśna Chūḍāmaṇi*

This last work belongs to a kind of writing that might be called popular literature, although it is written in simple Sanskrit. Such works are used by fortune-tellers who sit by the roadside with cards lined up, as in Plate 94. These prognosticators are found today near courts, where presumably their advice is as close to the mark as that of most lawyers. When a customer pays twenty-five paise, a parrot is released from a cage and allowed to peck at a card, which is then read out. No doubt this and other palm-leaf sets were used somewhat differently, probably in the restricted world of a wealthy owner, and obviously not lined up in separate envelopes as is the modern practice. Yet the wording on the back of each image follows traditions that are still alive today.

The subjects represented are labelled Rāmachandra, Sītādevi, Lakshmaṇa, Kumbhakarna, a royal elephant, a deer, Hanumāna, Nārada, a wishing cow, a beggar with his dog, a warrior, a demon, Sugrīva, Indrajita, an overflowing vase, a tiger, Kuvera, a Kirāta tribal, a cow, a hawk, and a royal hamsa or goose. Three examples of the text convey its functional, repetitious nature:

Nārada signifies a quarrel that impedes undertakings.  
Seeing Nārada, you will make a journey afar into the forest.

All undertakings will be auspicious. You will get wisdom and wealth.  
Seeing Kāmadhenu, you will get commercial prosperity.

A diseased mendicant signifies that no new undertakings are good.  
Seeing an emaciated man, you will have endless grief and exile.

While the actual text is perfunctory, it is possible that these fortune-telling cards carried great weight. Certainly Prusti seems to have put great care into the pictures, and even types that he had used repeatedly before acquire immediacy here. For example, the generic "warrior" of Plate 66 shows extraordinary delicacy in the shading along the edges of his dhoti and in the elegance of line. Another similar but not identical text in the Orissa State Archives, Bhubaneswar, includes a hamsa drawn more as a formula, as one might expect in such a utilitarian context; and its images are less vivid because doubled-up on the page (Plate 93).<sup>83</sup> Prusti's hamsa, by contrast, evokes a deeply felt dream-image (Plate 64).

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In conclusion, a variety of kinds of texts have been illustrated by our artist. The consistency of his style whether he depicted verses from a Sanskrit devotional work, an ornate and secular Oriya romance, or a practical tool for fortune-telling may destroy some of one's sense of the distinctions among these genres. Or rather, his pictures remind us that such diverse kinds of writing were all valued in rural Orissa. At the same time, it

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<sup>83</sup>Das, Chitra-pothi, 95. Another similar manuscript is in the National Museum, No. 72. 115. This is entitled *Svapnavichāra* and appears to describe dreams as a basis for prognostication.

is worth remembering that Prusti's approach to the text was varied. He elaborated the simple, both by adding details to the *Lāvanyaavatī* and by refining the isolated images of the *Praśna Chūḍāmāṇi*. He followed iconographic formulas in the *Sangīta Dāmodara* and his *Gīta Govinda* shrines, seeking elegance of execution rather than novelty. He also developed some images of his own, both in the haunting, heartfelt scenes of the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* and in the lively descriptions of crowds of the *Sobhāvatī*. In short, while his own mature style remained distinctive, he was constantly experimenting in the way he employed it.

## CHAPTER VI

### HOME AND THE WORLD

The pictures of Raghunath Prusti open a window upon his world in a way that is unusual in the history of Indian art. All art of course reveals something about life around it, but in traditional India, the idealizing, prescriptive tradition is so strong that we are generally shown a highly selective picture. This is also one side of Prusti's work. The Never-Never Land of Kṛishṇa and the Gopīs may convey popular religious sentiment, but hardly the reality of the Indian countryside. The romance of Lāvaṇyavatī and Chandrabhānu may evoke the dreams of the court of Ghumsar, but hardly reality there, let alone in the village of Mundamarai. And yet into these conventional subjects, and the imagery they entail, Prusti in his mature works inserted a certain amount of descriptive reporting that tells us much about Orissa in the nineteenth century. In this he differed from his contemporaries, Sarathi Madala and Michha Patajoshi, whose pictures, at times inventive and original, stuck more to the realm of fantasy.

Prusti is comparable to the father of modern Oriya literature Fakir Mohan Senapati, who lived at the same time in northern Orissa. Fakir Mohan spent much of his life in the service of small princely states, whose causes he adopted. He was befriended by some English officials, although he also saw



their failings. At the same time his simple origins, captured in his own autobiography, stories, and novels have led him to be called "the first proletarian writer in modern India."<sup>84</sup> This complex position, even more than his mere contemporaneity, makes him an interesting counterpart to our artist.

## 1. The Village

To begin with the microcosm, a few selected pictures give us fascinating glimpses of life in Mundamarai late in the nineteenth century. In Plate 31 we see a specific depiction of the characteristic rural churn. Plate 50 illustrates various castes at work getting ready for the ruler's journey. According to Prusti's captions the three men on the upper left are artisans, preparing a helmet, an ornamental tassel, and some sort of sewing.<sup>85</sup> The cart in the centre is not systematically diagrammed in structure, but it does carry the kind of long, soft basket that is in use today in the region for transporting agricultural products. The "bearer" in front of the cart, clad in a dhoti with *gāmucchā* (towel) wrapped around his pole, is as accurate a picture of a peasant as one could ask for, distinguished from the more sophisticated artisans and traders. At the far top right a merchant appears with "laden horses." Below are two Brahmins, a subject familiar throughout

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<sup>84</sup>Mansinha, *History of Oriya Literature*, 177. His autobiography, *My Times and I*, has been translated by John Boulton. Bhubaneswar: Orissa Sahitya Akademi, 1985.

<sup>85</sup>The helmet, labelled *topi*, resembles that worn by soldiers in the *Sobhāvati* (e.g. Pl. 61, far right). The tassel (*jhula*) resembles ornaments we see stuck in turbans (Pls. 49 center, 61 right). The tailor, labelled *sutāra* (= *sūtradhara*, commonly a carpenter), seems to be embroidering the cuff of a man's churidar pyjama, held upside down.

Prusti's other works, one reading from a palm-leaf book. Four soldiers follow, the first labelled *pāika* drawing a sword from its sheath. The soldier in the middle of the page is stringing his weapon in a characteristic pose, his foot and left hand holding the bow with the proper tension. In short, what we see here is the variety of kinds of people in a village, engaged in their activities, but not of course the physical setting of the village itself. In the same way, the countryside is depicted by a standard hill, a conventional prop into which are inserted acutely observed plants and animals.

The merchants in Prusti's work are intriguing because we know that he and several of his patrons (the two Subudhi families) belonged to this caste. In Plate 50, one (far right, bottom) is simply identified as *bañijāru*, and the figure above this represents a trader transporting goods by horseback. Both wear turbans, unlike the other villagers, and are dressed in relatively elegant clothes and jewelry. In fact these figures would be hard to distinguish in status from Chandrabhānu in this same work (Plate 43) or the Prince of Kashmir in the *Śobhāvati* (Plate 56). It seems significant that this artist saw merchants as potentially on a par with kings. Obviously some traders prospered in this period. At the same time, the rise in the export of some kinds of raw materials under the British brought hardship to local industries that had formerly processed these goods. In particular, the export of large quantities of oilseeds meant that the former local oilmen were out of work.<sup>86</sup> This might have contributed to the decision by Raghunath Prusti, son of a *teli*, to abandon his hereditary means of living.

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<sup>86</sup>Krushna C. Jena, *Socio-Economic Conditions of Orissa*. Delhi: Sundeep Prakashan, 1978, 135.

What of the misery of rural life for the poor? Early in the nineteenth century, Ganjam town was ravaged by fever, leading to the abandonment of the place. There were twenty disastrous floods in Orissa in the second half of the century.<sup>87</sup> Prusti was surely alive in 1866, the year of the Orissa Famine, one of the worst in India's history. Fakir Mohan Senapati wrote in Balasore:

By mid-February the majority of the peasants and almost all the artisans were scattered and chewing anything they could lay hands on. When the tender leaves came out on the tamarind trees, people swarmed up them like monkeys, ten to twenty to a tree to pick and eat the leaves. Everyone was just skin and bones with sunken eyes. . . . From mid-March on the death-rate mounted. On the roads, the river-ghats, by bathing tanks and in the woods, wherever you looked, you saw only corpses.<sup>88</sup>

Obviously Prusti's reportorial instincts did not lead to the depiction of this grim reality in his palm-leaf manuscripts. Perhaps it was forgotten by the 1880's. Certainly it would not have been appropriate to most of the romantic and religious texts that he illustrated. And yet in the *Praśna Chūdāmaṇi*, when an emaciated beggar was called for, Prusti made this one of his most vivid and sympathetic images (Plate 64).

## B. The Court

Clearly the courtly ideal predominated, in part because of the *kāvya* texts themselves, set in the world of princes, but in part also because this elegant life-style must have appealed to the artist and his various patrons. It is worth remembering that this was a hard time for many princes, and that such elegance did not actually prevail at many small courts in Orissa toward

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<sup>87</sup>Jena, *Socio-Economic Conditions of Orissa*, 89.

<sup>88</sup>Fakirmohana Senapati, *My Times and I*, 28.

the end of the nineteenth century. Fakir Mohan Senapati describes the difficulties of various princely states he served, in particular the abject penury of the Rājā of Dompara, who faced a rebellion of his headmen.<sup>89</sup> Thus both for minor *kshātriyas* and for some successful merchants, the courtly ideal belonged to a previous era. Even the battles that form such a vivid culmination to many of these manuscripts were probably a thing of the past in Ganjam in the 1880's.

Prusti depicts textiles with a wider variety of pattern than do most illustrators. Many appear to be printed designs. Śobhāvatī's sari in Plate 55 shows a border with irregular transverse lines that may represent the ikat of western Orissa; it is interesting this does not appear more often. The striped material that is used often for kurtas and pyjamas (e. g. Plates 3, 12, 18, 21) may be identified as *mashroo*, a brocade, usually of mixed silk and cotton, made primarily in Gujarat but widely imported for such costumes into the Deccan; Prusti is by no means the only Orissan artist who depicted this fabric. In general, the variety of textiles in his work suggests cosmopolitan tastes.

Ornaments are as copiously included in palm-leaf illustrations as in literature of the period, although it is not always possible to match name to image. For example, in Plates 55 and 61 men and women wear earrings both in the upper ear (*bentula*) and in the lower.<sup>90</sup> The nose-ring, introduced in this area under Muslim influence in the fifteenth century, usually appears to be inserted in the nostril, although attendants may wear the *besar*, inserted

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<sup>89</sup>Fakirmohana Senapati, *My Times and I*, Ch. 14.

<sup>90</sup>K.C. Sahu, "Ornaments in Mediaeval Orissa," in *Literature and Social Life in Mediaeval Orissa*. Ranchi: Pustak Sadan, 1971, 93.



through the central septum, as is common in Ganjam District today (Plate 55 left). The variety of head ornaments and bracelets increases in Prusti's later work, suggesting his own growing skill and ingenuity perhaps more than the reality of Orissan dress.

Some kinds of furnishings in these illustrations survive today. One still sees writing desks like that in Plate 52, meant to be used by someone sitting on the floor; this design is not peculiar to Orissa in the nineteenth century. Curved palanquins with support bars that arch upward in front as in Plate 43 are to be found in monasteries and temples of this area.<sup>91</sup> The elaborate architecture that frames many interior scenes follows traditional canons visible in religious as well as secular buildings of the nineteenth century. The rounded, elaborate columns in particular may reproduce forms carved in wood.<sup>92</sup> Architecture and furnishings are particularly elaborate in the *Śobhāvatī*, which includes swinging doors (Colour Plate I), carvings of dancers used as caryatids, and glass lamps that hang from the ceiling and project on brackets from the wall.

While one may be intrigued by the objects of foreign origin such as the table and clock in Colour Plate I, it is worth noting that these illustrations are in general a goldmine of information for local Orissan material culture in the nineteenth century. The ewer, spittoon, inkpot (?), and birdcage in this same scene represent forms that until recently were being locally produced. The musical instruments in Plates 8 and 47 would seem to be well established in

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<sup>91</sup>Fischer, Mahapatra, and Pathy, *Orissa*, fig. 201. A different design appears in Plate 60.

<sup>92</sup>Fischer, Mahapatra, and Pathy, *Orissa*, fig. 228.

Ganjam district. They include a bowed sarangi with complex belly of a type not well documented in Eastern India.<sup>93</sup>

If the supposition is correct that much of the material luxury Prusti depicts derives from the ideals of the small princely states, it may seem odd that we have no documented connection between him and the court nearest to Mundamarai. Dharakot, two kilometres away, is mentioned as the taluq in which his books were produced. Surely this is the place where Prusti is most likely to have seen courtly life. In fact, the Rājā of Dharakot until 1880 was Braja Sundar Simha, a nobleman distinguished for his modernity and generosity.<sup>94</sup> At his death, his five-year-old son Madan Mohan succeeded to the throne, and Dharakot remained under the management of the British Court of Wards until 1896. Thus the local ruler during most of Prusti's career was not a likely candidate as a patron, although it is not impossible that the artist visited the palace. The present heir to the palace of Dharakot knows the legend of Ulu Chakra, although he owns no works by the master.

### C. Puri

Puri is not merely the major religious centre in the area, roughly a hundred and fifty kilometres from Mundamarai. It is the seat of the religious power of the Rājā of Khurdha, whose position as chief *sevaka* at the temple and as the actual representative of Lord Jagannātha was part of his claim to sovereignty over the smaller Gaḍajāta states of Orissa. Thus it was a significant statement that the dated colophons of most Orissan manuscripts

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<sup>93</sup>Jop Bor, "The Voice of the Sarangi," *National Centre for the Performing Arts, Quarterly Journal* XV & XVI (1986-7), fig. 4 ff. This instrument also appears in the male band depicted in Plate 12.

<sup>94</sup>A. Vadivelu, *The Aristocracy of Southern India*. Madras: 1907, II, 130.

cited the regnal year of the Khurdha overlord, placing villages such as Mundamarai in that political framework. And this in turn was an expression of the Orissan identity of this part of Ganjam District, even though its British administration linked it to Madras Presidency along with the neighboring Telugu areas.

Moreover Puri was of course the residence of Jagannātha, Lord of the Universe, for his devotees the supreme form of Kṛishṇa and ultimately of Viṣṇu. This was the environment in which the *Gīta Govinda* took shape. The *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā* ascribes all of Viṣṇu's exploits to Jagannātha. Likewise in the shorter *Kuṇḍalī Jaṇāṇa*, Kṛishṇa appears thrice in this form. Yet another indication of Lord Jagannātha's role is the inclusion of an image of his Temple at the beginning of manuscripts such as the *Saṅgīta Dāmodara*, even when it is not mentioned in the text, like the standard images of Gaṇeśa, Sarasvatī, and Durgā.

It is noteworthy that the contemporary Sarathi Madala Patnaik did not have Prusti's penchant for including the Puri Temple, perhaps for religious reasons, perhaps because the detailed depiction of the entire shrine was not congenial to Sarathi Madala's more slapdash style. At the same time, Prusti did not invent this type of image. The wall-paintings of Buguda, executed in the 1820's, include a large map of the Puri Temple, which follows the form of the elaborate *paṭa chitras*, representing the entire Śaṅkha Kshetra within the form of a conch shell.<sup>95</sup>

It is interesting to compare Prusti's early version of this subject with that of the second, mannered *Ushābhilāsha*, which resembles his in basic

<sup>95</sup>Fischer, Mahapatra, and Pathy, *Orissa*, fig. 577 (a detail of the platform where Snāna Jātrā takes place). Pathy, *Mural Paintings in Orissa*, Pls. 12, 13 (overlapping details from the lower left, outside the temple compound).

iconography (Colour Plates C, M). The general arrangement is very similar, with the ocean on the right and the Lion Gate toward the left, a disposition that is not mandatory, for the Lion Gate in fact faces in the direction of the ocean. Prusti has executed his details somewhat more meticulously, so that the small structures are distinguished by form and sometimes by additional labels. Among the details that Prusti adds is the Aruṇa stambha, between the outer wall of the main temple and the square compound of what is labelled Gundichā Mandira. Here it would be wrong to infer that the first manuscript pre-dates the transport of this column from Konarak in the 1790's, for it may have been omitted only because the exterior of the Jagannātha temple is depicted very simply. It is characteristic of Prusti, however, knowing this element to be there, that he would rearrange his design in order to include it.

The pages of the Nuagaon *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśa* are only three quarters the length of those of the Bhubaneswar *Ushābhiṣha*, which led Prusti to eliminate everything to the left of the Aruṇa stambha here (Plate 27). This was indeed a rational expedient, for the Gundichā Mandira in fact lies several kilometres from the Lion Gate. Otherwise, Prusti's second image includes almost all the smaller shrines of the main compound, with a few additions, such as a pair of foot-prints on the upper right. In a few cases the position of particular buildings varies; for example the Śiva shrine (Pātāleśvara) shown above the lion gate in Plate 15 is shifted below the kitchen (labelled *roshaśāḷa*) in Plate 27. However these maps were produced, they suggest considerable familiarity with the Puri temple on the part of the artist.

The temple enshrining Lord Jagannātha that appears at the beginning of the *Sangīta Dāmodara* differs considerably from the previous two (Colour Plate G). While the basic configuration of the main shrine is the same, this is oriented to the right of the page. The Lion Gate in this case lacks stairs, and



outside it lies a shrine with images of Gaṇeśa and Anantaśayana. To the left, within the main compound, are three shrines of goddesses. Not only is the number of subordinate buildings radically smaller, but the mode of depiction also differs, for the gates are shown from the side and the upper structures are upside down, whereas the previous two had consistently shown everything from one side. Given the fundamental accuracy of the images of Puri in the *Ushābhiṣā* and the *Ārtatrāṇa Chautiśā*, it seems fair to conclude that the *Sangīta Dāmodara* depicts another shrine to Jagannātha in some other town. Since such smaller shrines lacked the iconographic traditions of the Chitrakāras of Puri, it is possible that Prusti was on his own in devising a visual formula; hence his experimentation with different viewpoints.

#### D. The World at Large

Was central Ganjam District late in the nineteenth century oblivious to the larger currents of Indian history? What of the various powers that had held political sway over the region, ultimately controlling the Rājās of Khurdha and some aspects of the Puri Temple? Toward the middle of the eighteenth century the Maratha Bhonsles of Nagpur came to rule much of Orissa as well as Bengal to the north. Yet they were expelled from Ganjam by the British in 1765, earlier than in other parts of the region. The impact of the Marathas may have been largely an accentuation of chaotic conditions, with decentralized administration and continued battles, whose legendary memory perhaps survives in the vivid fighting scenes of later manuscripts. In terms of material culture, the brief Bhonsle presence in Ganjam may be seen only in the distinctive Maratha turban, a pre-formed *pagaḍi* with a narrow brim projecting in front. This differs from the more common

turban bound tightly around the skull in the late Mughal fashion (Plate 66), as well as a loosely wound type worn by some warriors (Plate 56). The Maratha type is reserved particularly for musicians (Plate 58), either indicating that they come from the outside or perhaps because it was adopted by them as a slightly exotic costume.

The British must have been present in this region from 1765 onward as administrators, first in Ganjam town and later in Berhampur. They do not, however, appear as actual participants in the illustrations that we know come from this area, whereas English soldiers are occasionally shown in a mythological context in works from the north, such as the 1832 *Vaidehīśa Viḷāsa* from Baripada (Plate 76). English troops are also depicted arriving in boats in some of the larger *paṭa chitras* of Puri.<sup>96</sup> Perhaps Englishmen were less commonly seen in the area of Mundamarai, or perhaps they were simply deemed unacceptable as a subject for book illustration.

Certainly some foreign objects were brought into Prusti's pictures for the *kāvya*s of Upendra Bhañja, with little concern for anachronism. For example the scene of the hero writing at night in the *Śobhāvatī* includes a clock. And there, as well as in the *Lāvaṇyavatī*, we see furniture of the Regency period (1810-1820). This is interesting because it indicates the time lag of such imports into Orissa: here they were in use some sixty years after they were made. Such delicate furniture is not likely to have been used in ordinary offices and dak bungalows in Ganjam District. Thus it seems likely that this was owned by some wealthy Oriya in the area. On the whole Prusti,

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<sup>96</sup>For example one in the Bharat Kala Bhavan, Varanasi. Troops in foreign costumes also appear as door guardians in the stucco decorations of the nineteenth century palace at Nilagiri, near Balasore, and similar figures survive in folk paintings for weddings made recently in Puri District.

with his taste for recording natural details, works in more of these objects that reflect connections with the outer world than do his contemporary illustrators. From such details we get a sense of how the vision of a relatively isolated village was gradually changing with outside contacts. This is the period when railroads and telephones were reaching Rajasthan and were likewise depicted in the wall-paintings of Shekhavati. In Orissa the number of intrusions is smaller, but the same longstanding impulse is at work, a gusto for exotic detail as a way of showing the progressiveness and splendour of the rich world that is depicted.

What of the possibility that European pictures lie behind the style of Prusti's descriptive, illusionistic images? Occasional hatching along the edge of figures, three-quarters views of faces, and spatial overlap might be explained as borrowings from the West, conceivably the result of English prints that might have been present in the Dharakot palace, along with Regency furniture. We strongly disagree, however. Our discussion above of these effects has deliberately described them as well integrated into the artist's complex yet fundamentally traditional style. They are employed with expressive purpose rather than intruding as the replication of some half-understood foreign model. Moreover these effects are frequently extensions of conventions already present in the Orissan tradition. For example, the earlier use of lines to depict the hair of animals lay behind Prusti's occasional hatching (Plate 66), and similarly the widespread use of iconic frontal faces paved the way for the variety of angles from which he depicted the head. In fact we have found no case in which our artist literally mimicked a particular European image. Thus it seems possible that stray Western prints might have confirmed Prusti's penchant for selective natural detail, but this cannot be documented and can hardly be said to have guided

his forms. In style as well as content, Prusti's images are complex but not eclectic.

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In conclusion, if we look both at what is shown in Prusti's illustrations and at the way in which this is represented, it is hard to classify this in traditional terms. The texts that are illustrated range from a Sanskrit work revered throughout India to local vernacular literature. The images combine idealized visions of gods and princes with particular details of local life. And local life itself includes the world of the temple, the *rājā*, and occasionally the village beggar. The artist himself was not an artist by inheritance, nor does he appear to have had more than the patronage of local men of money. Yet his work was refined, following clearly defined canons, and also open to innovation of style. The terms fine art and folk art have little meaning here. In the same way, the world he depicts includes both the Great and the Little traditions, *mārgi* and *deśi*, reminding us of the artificiality of such distinctions. This is art of the village and also of the court. Ulu Chakra, the maverick scribe and illustrator, was an independent figure within a complex and lively culture.



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The importance of the present study lies in the first place in showing the high quality of Raghunath Prusti's work. In the second place, comparison between his and others' illustrations clarifies the entire development of illustrated palm-leaf manuscripts in Orissa. Thirdly, his pictures give an unusual glimpse of actual material culture in the 1880's, including details of both village and court life. Finally, the career of Prusti brings alive a historical Indian artist as a real human being and individual, rather than as a stereotyped anonymous artisan.

This book is the first detailed study which deals with a single artist and his development within a traditional Indian context.

Dr. J.P. Das, the well-known Oriya poet, is the author of *Puri Paintings* as well as *Chitra-Pothi: Illustrated Palm-Leaf Manuscripts from Orissa*. Professor Joanna Williams teaches the History of Indian Art at the University of California in Berkeley and has written *The Art of Gupta India*.

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